

# THE Asylum

VOL. 39 NO. 2



SUMMER 2021

Quarterly Journal of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society • COINBOOKS.ORG



## NBS Board of Trustees 2021–2023 Election



10

Types and Varieties of the U. S. Cent. 1793.



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### MEET ME IN S

*App-  
you method of  
Researching up the  
new shell along  
delight the future*  
Kurt R. Krutz  
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Valley View  
Richard Ray

Gold.—Three Pound Pi  
Sovereign, Crown  
Oxford Mint,  
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line, HELIG. P  
below, surrounds  
extra line, £4 10  
£11, £12 15s.,  
£3 11s., and £3  
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profile bust to 1  
similar to Three  
or 1645; £2 to  
£16 10s.; some  
£1 9s., and £1 1  
Half Sovereign  
to 1645; £2 to  
£1 9s., and £1 1  
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### THE HISTORY AND COINAGE OF MACHIN'S MILLS



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### ANCIENT COINS IN EARLY AMERICAN AUCTIONS, 1869-1939

*A Bibliography and Analysis of Early American Auction Catalogs  
with Photographically Printed Illustrations of Ancient Coins*

David F. Fanning



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# Numismatic Bibliomania Society

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**NBS Membership/Subscriptions:** *The Asylum* is mailed to all NBS Members. Membership is \$40.00 inside the United States, \$60.00 outside the U.S., \$25 for digital-only and \$10 Youth Membership. New members receive one back issue plus all new issues upon publication. Requests for membership and change of address should be submitted to the Treasurer at the address below.

**Submissions:** *The Asylum* (ISSN 1552-1931) is published in four issues per year. Submissions should be sent to the editor at nbsasylum@gmail.com. Authors, please put your name(s) and contact information on all submitted material. All accepted manuscripts become the property of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society. For more information, please contact the editor.

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\*A 10% discount may be applied for a full-year commitment. A 10% discount is available for NBS members and community organizations.

## **Deadlines for Submissions and Advertising:**

Spring Issue (No. 1) February 1  
Summer Issue (No. 2) May 1

Autumn Issue (No. 3) August 23 (After ANA)  
Winter Issue (No. 4) November 1

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Tom Harrison  
NBS President

## Message from the President

As we plan for this summer's ANA World's Fair of Money in Rosemont, we remain optimistic the convention will be held. The NBS will be conducting our annual charity auction in conjunction with the ANA Convention. David Fanning has graciously agreed to accept and catalog items for the auction. The auction will be held at the NBS General Meeting, or by mail bid if the convention is cancelled. Again this year we truly appreciate the members' continued support of this all important event. While we are grateful for all donations, we especially need items valued over \$100. Please contact David at [df@numislit.com](mailto:df@numislit.com) before sending your donations. Donations can be sent to: David Fanning, 141 W. Johnstown Road, Gahanna, Ohio 43230 and should be received by June 30. Please watch for convention updates in the *E-Sylum* as plans are confirmed.

This being an election year I would like to recognize the many dedicated members who continue to step up in leadership roles and serve the NBS. The efforts of your officers, treasurer, NBS editor, E-Sylum editor, website host, webmaster and others work diligently to ensure the NBS runs smoothly year after year. The NBS has a 40 year track record of devoted members who carry the torch and keep the numismatic literature flame alive. On behalf of the NBS membership, I want to share a sincere word of gratitude to both the past and present friends of the NBS for your commitment that has enriched our collecting experience.

May your numismatic library provide investigation, discovery and, most of all, enjoyment.



## Support Your NBS

Established in 1979, the Numismatic Bibliomania Society's purpose is to stimulate interest in collecting numismatic literature and cultivate cooperation among collectors and researchers. The NBS has a rich history of generous members who have supported its mission over the years.

The NBS would be truly grateful for your donation to help sustain our role in the numismatic community. As a 501(c)3 organization, all donations to the NBS are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

***Become a Sustaining Member or  
make a one-time donation today.***

Contact NBS Treasurer Chuck Heck at [treasurer@coinbooks.org](mailto:treasurer@coinbooks.org).



# NBS 2021 Board of Trustees Slate of Candidates

2021 is an election year for the Numismatic Bibliomania Society's Board of Trustees. Please use the ballot that has been enclosed with this issue or vote online at [surveymonkey.com/r/KWXXKDC2](https://surveymonkey.com/r/KWXXKDC2) to vote for the NBS members who have volunteered to serve for the 2021–2023 term. Please vote or return ballots by **June 30, 2021**.

## *President*



### **Tom Harrison, *current president***

It has been my privilege to serve as President of the NBS the past four years. I started collecting numismatic literature in the late 1970s when a groundswell of excitement was building for this long neglected branch of numismatics. In 2008, following nearly a twenty year hiatus from the hobby, I returned with a renewed enthusiasm. I look forward to working with the Board and the entire NBS membership as we continue to

explore ways to increase enthusiasm and share our passion for numismatic literature with the greater numismatic community.

## *Vice President*



### **Len Augsburger, *current vice president***

Len Augsburger is the project coordinator of the Newman Numismatic Portal ([NewmanPortal.org](https://NewmanPortal.org)), an online numismatic library administered by Washington University in St. Louis and sponsored by the Eric P. Newman Numismatic Education Society. Len has won the Book of the Year award from the Numismatic Literary Guild on three occasions, and serves as president of the Liberty Seated Collectors Club. He is a Fellow

of the American Numismatic Society, a member of the Rittenhouse Society, the New York Numismatic Club, and many other numismatic clubs and organizations.

## *Secretary/Treasurer*



### **Chuck Heck, *current treasurer***

I have served as your elected Treasurer for the past 2 years and I am asking that you vote for me again as Treasurer for the next 2 years.

Though I am retired from public practice, I still maintain my New York State C.P.A. license and I continue to provide consulting services on a limited basis. I keep myself updated

on issues involving Non-Profit entities through several subscription services along with directed updates from the Internal Revenue Service and several states.

The NBS is fortunate to have talented and dedicated Board Members who are concerned with administering their operational duties in full compliance with Federal and State of Ohio statutes. I can promise you that the NBS financial records are accurate and are accessible to any member simply by asking. I also want to state that the NBS has very generous members who make personal donations and who participate in the annual Charitable Book Auction. Without such member support the NBS would need to constrict operations. Lastly, I will strive to serve the organization with honesty and integrity. Thank you!

## Trustees



### **David F. Fanning, current trustee**

David F. Fanning is a principal of Kolbe & Fanning Numismatic Booksellers, an auction and retail firm located in the Columbus, Ohio area. A student of numismatic literature since childhood, he holds a Ph.D. in English from the Ohio State University and is a Life Member of the American Numismatic Association. He is an elected Fellow of the American Numismatic Society and has been named to the honorary Rittenhouse Society as well as the Attinelli Fellowship. He is the author of *Ancient Coins in Early American Auctions* and has published numerous articles on numismatic literature, North American coins and medals, medieval and modern foreign coins, and other topics.



### **Dan Hamelberg, current trustee**

Dan Hamelberg is a current ANS Trustee, an ANA & ANS Life Member, a Member EAC, FUN, LSCC, C4, Flying Eagle & Indian Cent Collectors Society. He is also a past NBS President and has been a board member for many years, as well as receiving the NBS's George F. Kolbe Award for Lifetime Achievement Numismatic Literature. He has assembled a significant U.S. Coin collection of "First Year of Type" and a comprehensive collection of U.S. Numismatic Literature.

"I would like to see more engagement with young collectors as they are the future of our hobby. The NBS needs and deserves an active board of directors with officers to match to maintain and improve a society devoted to the hobby of Numismatic Literature."



### **David Hill, current trustee**

David Hill is the Librarian and Archivist at the American Numismatic Society, and he also oversees the satellite operation of the Newman Numismatic Portal that is based there. He has over twenty-five years of experience working with books and archival materials, having held positions at the Columbia University Archives and Columbian Library, the Berkshire County Historical Society (Massachusetts), the Westchester County Archives, and Iona College Li-

brary (New Rochelle, N.Y.). He has been with the ANS since 2010. His numerous articles on numismatics and numismatic literature have appeared in *ANS Magazine* and *The Asylum*.

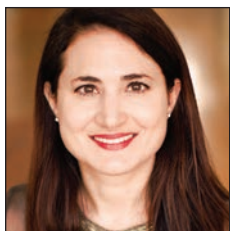


### **W. David Perkins, current trustee**

W. David Perkins is a longtime collector and researcher of the early United States silver dollars 1794-1803. Dave also collects Civil War Store Cards, tokens and Numismatic Literature, including books, catalogs and documents pertaining to the great early silver dollar collections and collectors. His interest in Civil War Store Cards started with a discovery that his great-great-grandfather issued two Detroit, Michigan Civil War tokens in 1863.

Dave was a consultant to Bowers & Merena in the cataloging of the Eliasberg early silver dollars and with Heritage Auctions for the Eric P. Newman early quarters and dollars, and has cataloged and consulted on early dollars and other coins and tokens for a number of numismatic auction firms. He has spoken on the early dollars at a number of ANA Numismatic Theatres and has taught a class on the dollars at the ANA Summer Conference. Dave has also been a contributor to a number of numismatic books over the years.

Dave is a past Secretary / Treasurer of NBS. In addition to NBS, Dave is a member of numerous numismatic organizations and clubs including the ANA, ANS, JRCS (LM), NLG, EAC, TAMS, CWTS (LM) and others. Dave is an officer and is Treasurer of the John Reich Collector's Society. He has authored dozens of articles for a wide variety of publications including *The Asylum*, *John Reich Journal*, *Coin World*, *TAMS Journal*, *Civil War Token Journal*, *The Gobrecht Journal*, *NOW News* and *Talkin' Tokens*. His articles have won literary awards from NLG, JRCS, CWTS, TAMS, NTCA and NOW.



### **Shanna Schmidt**

Shanna Schmidt graduated from the University of Illinois with a Bachelor of Science in 1993. Her course of study was Communications, with a minor in Classical Piano. Previous to entering the world of numismatics, Shanna worked for the Chicago advertising firm Leo Burnett both in the USA and abroad, in Copenhagen and Frankfurt. After almost ten years of working overseas, Shanna Schmidt returned to Chicago to work in the

company her father had founded, Harlan J. Berk Ltd. She graduated with a Master of Liberal Arts from the University of Chicago in 2013. Her master's thesis was on the Cultural Property Debate as it relates specifically to ancient coins. In 2016 Shanna Schmidt decided to become an independent coin dealer, enabling her to focus efforts on her customers and building their collections.

Shanna Schmidt is specialized in ancient numismatics, with a particular focus placed on Greek coinage. In the last few years she has broadened her inventory to include areas of world coinage with an emphasis on British hammered, German Thalers and English Condor Tokens. Shanna is also extremely dedicated to enriching her customers with history on the coins she handles and has worked to create her own



numismatic library. Since becoming an independent dealer in 2016 Shanna has purchased over 1,000 books for self use. She strives to create a world class numismatic library.

When still at Harlan J. Berk Ltd., Shanna coordinated a cooperation with the University of Chicago Regenstein Library to create a satellite numismatic library with Harlan J. Berk Ltd. She is also the initiator and one of the founders of the “History in Your Hands Foundation,” a charitable organization that aims at giving schoolkids and students the chance to hold original coins in their hands.

Shanna Schmidt was elected to the Board of Governors of the American Numismatic Association in 2019 and is expected to run again in 2021. She also held a board member position with the IAPN and is a member of the Chicago Coin Club. Shanna is fluent in German. Shanna became a fellow of the American Numismatic Society in October, 2020.



### **Roger Siboni**

My name is Roger Siboni. I collect colonial numismatic coinage, paper money and ephemera of all types, even Washington inaugural buttons. It is the rich history of this material, and those that collect it, that led me to numismatic literature.

As with my numismatic collecting, I have attempted to take an expansive, content- and provenance-rich approach to collecting literature. This has made my journey a multi-decade one that I am still on. I would like to instill in new collectors that same long-term collecting view, and share with them the fun and thrill of the long hunt.

I am the Past President of American Numismatic Society (ANS), as well as a former Associate Editor of *C-4 Newsletter*. I am a member of the ANA, C-4, NBS, MCA, EAC, Rittenhouse Society, Attinelli Fellowship, New York Numismatic Club, Palm Beach Coin Club, past member New Jersey Numismatic Society and San Francisco Coin Club.

I co-authored the NLG-awarded book *New Jersey State Coppers* with John L. Howes and A. Buell Ish. I published various numismatic articles in *Colonial Newsletter*, *C-4 Newsletter*, *MCA Advisory*, *The Asylum*, and the *E-Sylum*. I am a red book contributor for Colonial Coinage and a contributor to various colonial coinage publications.



### **Dave Steine, current trustee**

I was born in southeast Minnesota into a family of automobile fanatics and collectors. My father and all five of his brothers had a passion for vintage Cadillacs. By the time I was five years old I was working in my father's hobby shop helping to restore old cars. I became interested in coins when one of my uncles showed me some early gold coins.

My mother would go shopping for fruits and vegetables at a local market and nearby a couple doors down was a little coin shop run by an elderly lady. I would ride along with Mom and with my money saved from doing chores and helping with the cars, maybe five bucks a week, I would buy some interesting coins.

Today I live on a class A trout stream in western Wisconsin with my wife Judy and our two golden retrievers, Daisy and Lily. Our two sons Bryon and Ben are grown and work with me in our family business remanufacturing automotive engines and parts.

We have close to 100 dedicated employees working at Tri Star Engines and Transmissions, the company I founded over 30 years ago. In addition to collecting coins and numismatic books I also collect Ford and Shelby automobiles and memorabilia.

Please use the enclosed ballot to go online to [surveymonkey.com/r/KW XKDC2](https://surveymonkey.com/r/KW XKDC2) to vote for NBS officers and trustees. Ballots must be received by **June 30, 2021** to be counted. Mail ballots to:

Maria Fanning  
NBS Election  
141 W. Johnstown Road  
Gahanna OH 43230



## Donate to the NBS Benefit Auction at ANA



Sample lots from 2020 NBS Auction

Each year at the ANA World's Fair of Money, the Numismatic Bibliomania Society conducts a benefit auction to raise funds for the organization. All items sold are donated to the NBS by members and 100% of the proceeds go to the NBS treasury. Suggested lot value is \$100 and up, but smaller donations may be accepted. A catalog will be compiled and distributed prior to the auction and absentee bid may be placed for those who cannot attend.

Please contact David Fanning at [df@numislit.com](mailto:df@numislit.com) to discuss possible donations.

# Bibliomaniac? Nah. Well, Maybe...

By George F. Kolbe

The date is June 30th, 1982. I am in Zürich, Switzerland, attending the Sotheby's auction of *An Important Collection of Books on Coins and Medals. From the library at Donaueschingen. The Property of His Serene Highness the Prince Fürstenberg.*

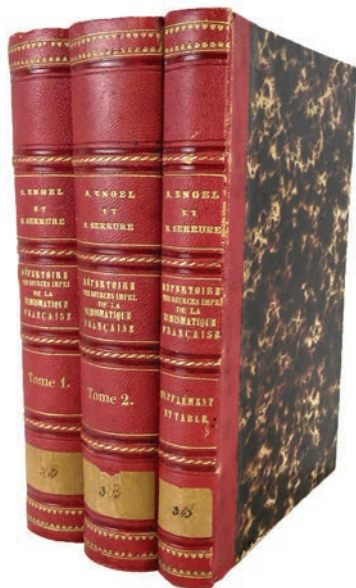
Colleagues David Edmonds (John Drury Rare Books) and Douglas Saville (Spink & Son Ltd.) are in attendance as well, along with a coterie of international coin dealers, many drawn to Zürich to attend the first of the ten-part series of Sotheby's memorable *Brand Collection* sales, taking place the following day. The coin business has not been doing well and that lassitude has begun to affect the numismatic book market, after a remarkable 1981.

The Fürstenberg books and catalogues are wonderful. It is as if a time machine has taken us back a century—or the books forward 100 years. They are handsomely bound, thus lovely to look at, and remarkably well-preserved. The three numismatic booksellers are rather restrained in their bidding, as are many of the other sale participants. In retrospect, the trio will sorely regret the caution; their purchases for stock at the sale are almost instantly snapped up. I manage to acquire a few of the large bulk lots, which provide dividends for years thereafter and make the sale particularly remunerative. Yet the sale was highly frustrating on a personal level.

By 1982, I had begun forming a library of classic numismatic bibliographies. One of the best books ever written on the works of a single country was that by Arthur Engel and Raymond Serrure: *Répertoire des sources imprimées de la numismatique française*, published in 1887. A year or two earlier, I was fortunate to acquire the two main volumes in the original wrappers, during a Paris visit to Bernard Poindessault and Josiane Vedrines. Bernard arranged to have them handsomely bound in crimson quarter morocco and I was thrilled to have this extremely useful reference work.

Then, as now, the 1889 *Supplément et table* was rarely encountered. Eventually I did acquire a complete three-volume set, nicely bound in quarter vellum. Yet, for the past four decades, I have lusted after the Fürstenberg set. I bid far more than I anticipated in 1982 but, until this year, I was unaware that I was crossing swords with the ultimate North American numismatic Francophile.

In January I received a first draft of the Kolbe & Fanning March 6, 2021 auction sale catalogue of the Richard Margolis International Numismatic Library. There it was! Lot 88. That the price realized tends to corroborate the first word of this article I cannot deny. Yet I am immensely pleased. To quote Robert Louis Stevenson (here under far more propitious circumstances): “*Home is the sailor, home from sea.*”



# Update from the Man Cave: Santa Leaves Delightful Numismatic Gimcracks

By Joel J. Orosz

When we last visited the Man Cave, during the first installment of the *Evolution of a Numismatic Library* series (*The Asylum*, Summer 2020), the Cave's office area was decorated with examples of the fine arts, but was lacking in what might be called the gimcrack, defined to be a showy ornament that nonetheless radiates an irresistible appeal. Thanks to Florence's gift-giving inspiration, gimcrackery struck twice at the Yuletide, leaving the Man Cave with two numismatic-related items—one Lilliputian, one Brobdingnagian—both of which delight without being excessively barnaced by tastefulness.

The tiny tchotchke is a valet tray of smoked glass, a mere 8 ½ inches wide and only 4 inches high at its greatest dimensions. Printed upon its curved surfaces are images of those things one might find in one's pocket at the end of the day. Although unmarked as to manufacturer, it can be confidently dated to the 1970s by the shape of the car key emblazoned upon it. Three of the images—the pocket watch, the lighter, and the cuff links—are anachronisms in 2021. This adorned valet tray could still serve as an overnight home for rings, or pocket change. The Lincoln cent and the Jefferson nickel would likely be among such coins, but undoubtedly not the Morgan dollar or the Liberty Walking half (which, for reasons known only to the caddy's designer, is noticeably larger than the dollar). It doesn't appear as if many of the items depicted ever resided in this tray, for its printed images are untouched by friction.

The large gimcrack seems, for all the world, designed to make tangible the concept of monetary inflation. It is a "stack" of Morgan dollars, 16 inches high, and 19 ½ inches in diameter, with its top offering a passable facsimile of an 1883 dollar obverse. Its round sides are scored with lines suggesting that a neat stack of 22 oversized dollars sits before you, but the "coins" edges lack reeding, and the *tout ensemble* is coated with a brassy finish that evokes a copper, rather than a silver, dollar. The piece weighs a substantial 23 pounds, and is sturdy enough to serve as a stool, if needed.

Close examination of the "obverse" suggests that submission to a grading service would result in a "details" determination, for the top has been noticeably cleaned, leaving pronounced hairlines and, in a few locations, abrasion of the coating. Perhaps these detractions provide a disguised blessing, for a gargantuan plastic slab would do little to add the ambiance in the Man Cave.

I have deployed the two pieces in close proximity to each other, with the pile o' Morgans serving as a notional footstool to my comfy red recliner, and the valet tray adorning the side table at the base of my *verre églomisé* lamp. In fact, despite the decided differences in the age and in the aesthetics of lamp and tray, they complement

each other rather harmoniously.

Whatever such *objets de gimcrackery* may lack in the way of high culture, there is nothing like well-chosen pieces such as these to embellish the lair of the coin aficionado. Now, as you might guess, I am eagerly in search of an apropos accompaniment: a giant stack of 1792 half dismes!





# Two Versions of the Levick Plate of 1793 Cents

By Jim Neiswinter

## *The Complete Story*

In the Spring 1994 issue of *The Asylum*, Frank Van Zandt wrote an article titled “Two Varieties of the Levick Plate of 1793 Cents.” He had discovered that he owned two varieties of the famous Levick Plate that had been published in the April 1869 issue of the *American Journal of Numismatics (AJN)*. In the last paragraph of his two-page article he wrote: “Whatever the reason for the two plates, it is important for collectors to know of their existence, and that one is superior to the other.”

The first version (Figure 1) has JNT LEVICK hand printed inside a box in the lower right corner of the plate with 1868 printed under his name. The second (Figure 2) has COMPILED BY JOSEPH N. T. LEVICK in the same position as the first version, but without the surrounding box and date. The first version is somewhat rarer.

After Van Zandt died in 2004, Joel Orosz eulogized the longtime NBS member in the Fall 2004 issue of *The Asylum*: “I would be a dishonest eulogist, however, if I were to minimize the dark side of Van Zandt’s personality. His tanned skin was rather thin, and as a result, he was perpetually embroiled in conflicts with fellow collectors or dealers. To be his friend for any length of time was to pass forth between his favor and his wrath.” I had not yet met Van Zandt, but I had certainly felt his wrath.

In 1996, I gave a talk on Joseph N.T. Levick at the Coinage of the Americas Conference at the American Numismatic Society (ANS) at their old location in Audubon Terrace in upper Manhattan. I wrote a monograph on my talk (chapter 1 in *America’s Large Cent*, edited by John Kleeberg) that was published in 1998. When I re-read my article recently I realized that I knew much more about Levick and his plate than I knew in 1996. This was all because of Frank Van Zandt.

Not too long after *America’s Large Cent* came out I got a phone call one evening from Van Zandt. I had heard his name but had never met him. After he introduced himself he started yelling. He claimed I had plagiarized his article in *The Asylum* on the Levick plate. When he said he was going to sue me I hung up on him. I was not the only call he made. ANS director Leslie Elam also received a call from Van Zandt, and he also threatened to sue the ANS.

Elam decided to have ANS curator John Kleeberg contact Eric Newman to ask him to mediate the brouhaha. He said Eric was very good at smoothing things over. After reading both my paper and Van Zandt’s article in *The Asylum* Newman decided there was no plagiarism.

After the decision I received a letter from Eric (Figure 4b). He included photocopies of two albumen prints of obverses and reverses of 1793 cents (Figure 3). He explained that he found these plates tipped in his copy of the April 1869 *AJN* issue

that contained Levick's plate, but he had always been puzzled as to what they were. Eric also sent these photocopies to Van Zandt after his 1994 article in *The Asylum* (Figure 4a). He had asked Van Zandt if he could find out anything about them. Van Zandt could not. Living on Long Island, not far from the ANS, I could.

In the fall of 2009 Joe Ciccone, the ANS archivist, told me he had found a notebook by Levick in the rare book room of the ANS library. Page 16 (Figure 5a) of this notebook gave me some answers about these plates. It told me that the photographer was Sarony & Co., the date, August 17, 1868, when the photographs were taken, and the names of the owners of the cents represented on the plates (Levick was a great believer in listing owners). These two plates pre-dated Levick's *A/N* plate by almost eight months, making them the first images of coins taken in this country even if they were not published. (I acquired the plates from the sale of Newman's library in 2018).

I now knew the who and the when about the plates, but not why they were made. It took a couple of more years before I found that answer.

At the 2011 ANA convention in Chicago I was talking with Charlie Davis (editor of *The Asylum* in 1994 when Van Zandt published his article) who showed me copies he had made of letters he found in the papers of Mathew Stickney. However, he refused to tell me where he got them. Later that same day I was talking with Scott Rubin. I told him what had happened with Davis. Scott knew right away where those letters came from. He said Stickney was from Salem, Massachusetts, and the letters must be from the Peabody Essex Museum, also in Salem. Stickney was one of the leading collectors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were two letters from Joseph Levick, dated Nov 14/68 and Nov 21/68 that caught my attention. Along with the first letter Levick included two albumen plates of the obverses and reverses of 1793 cents (Figure 3). Levick had sent these plates to collectors so they could examine and compare their own varieties of 1793 cents with those on the plates. I was able to purchase copies of these letters (Figures 8a, 8b, and 9) after seeing them on the museum's website. I now knew why Levick had made the two plates.

Sarony & Co. photographed the plates found by Eric Newman. The head of the firm was Napoleon Sarony (1821–1896), the premier theatrical photographer of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Quebec, he moved to New York City in 1836, with a studio at 37 Union Square West, three blocks south of Levick's store at Broadway and 20<sup>th</sup> Street.



Napoleon Sarony



George Rockwood

There was no mark of the photographer on the first version of the plate. There is on the second. Three lines are imprinted in an oval stamp at the bottom of the plate, found usually between obverse 11 and reverse K: Rockwood, Photographer, 839

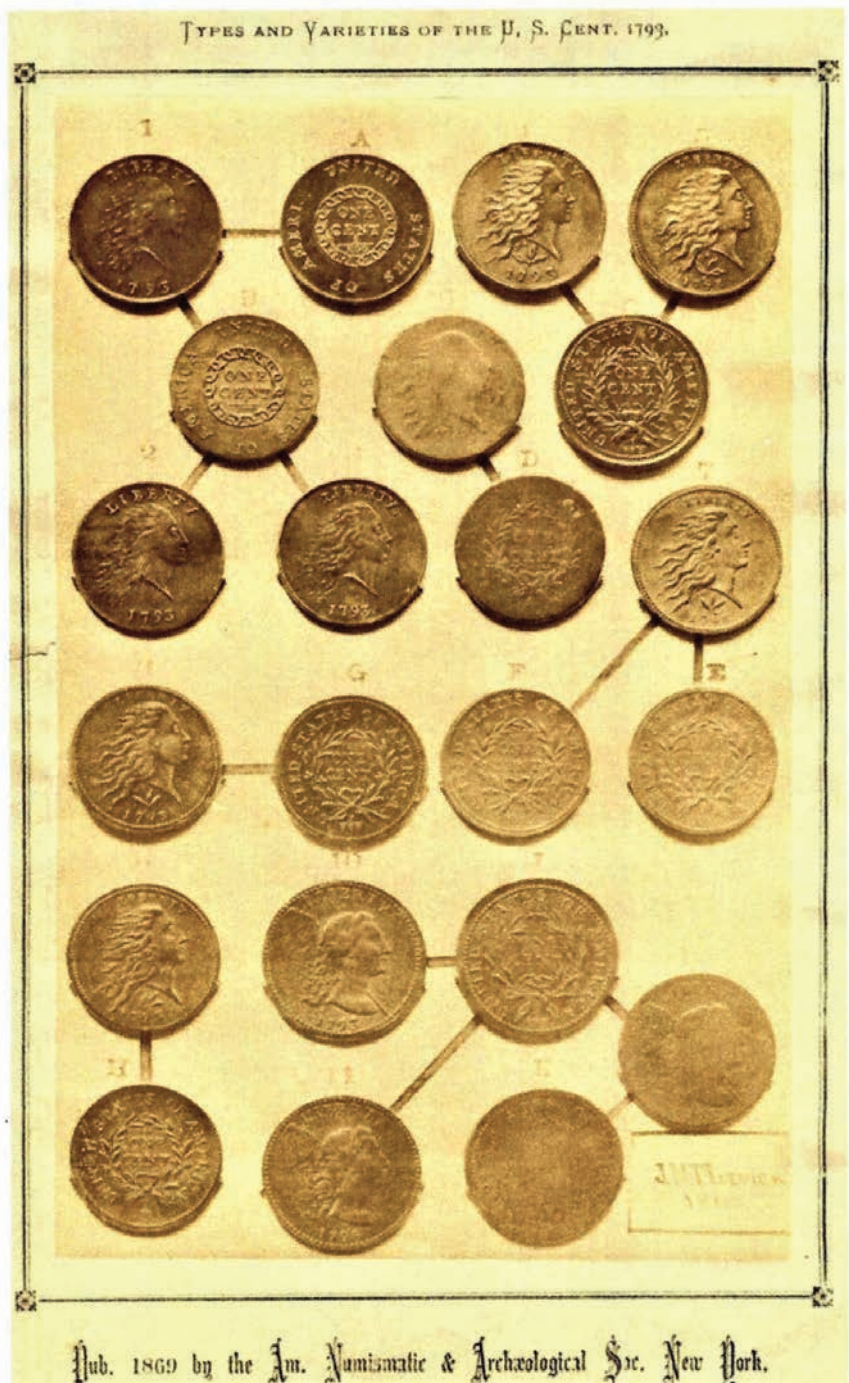


Figure 1



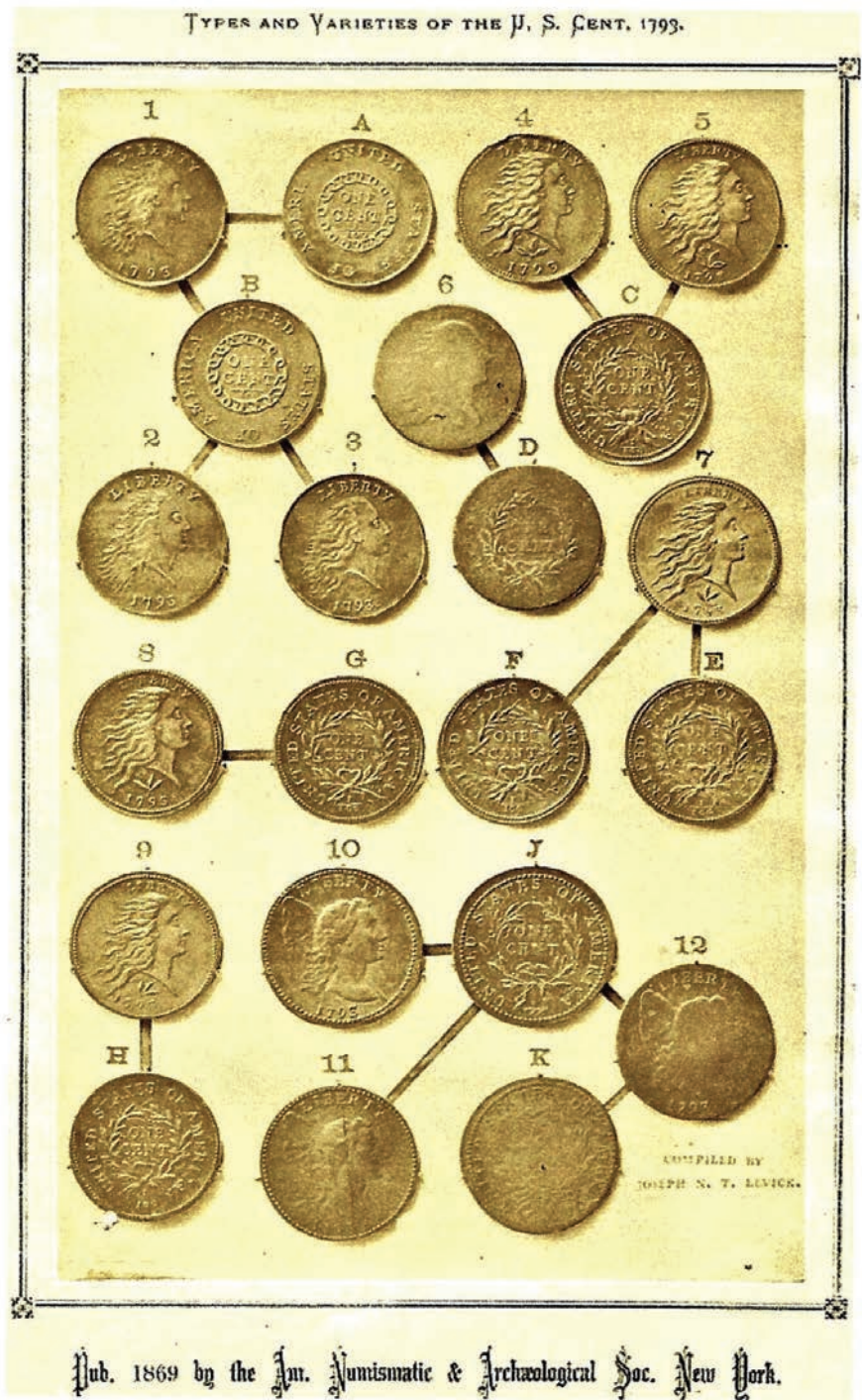


Figure 2



Figure 3



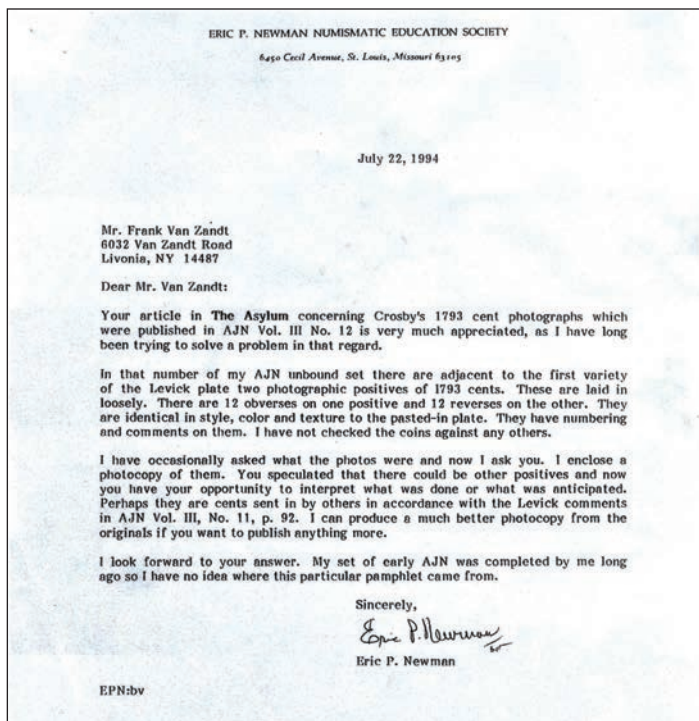


Figure 4a

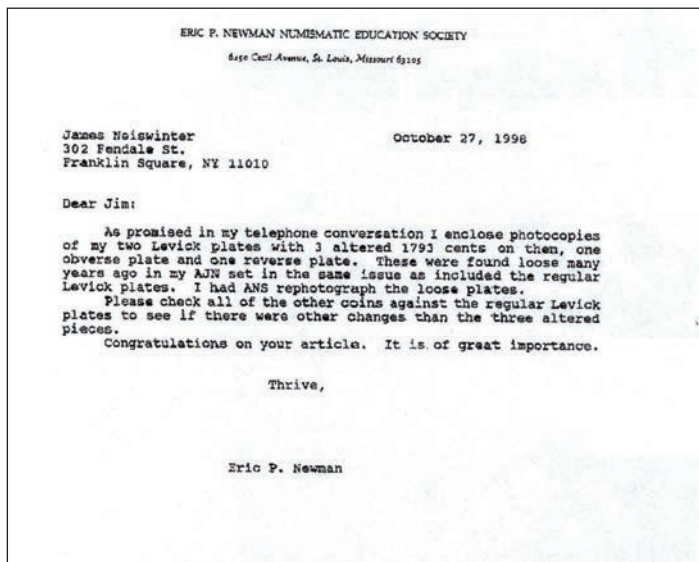


Figure 4b

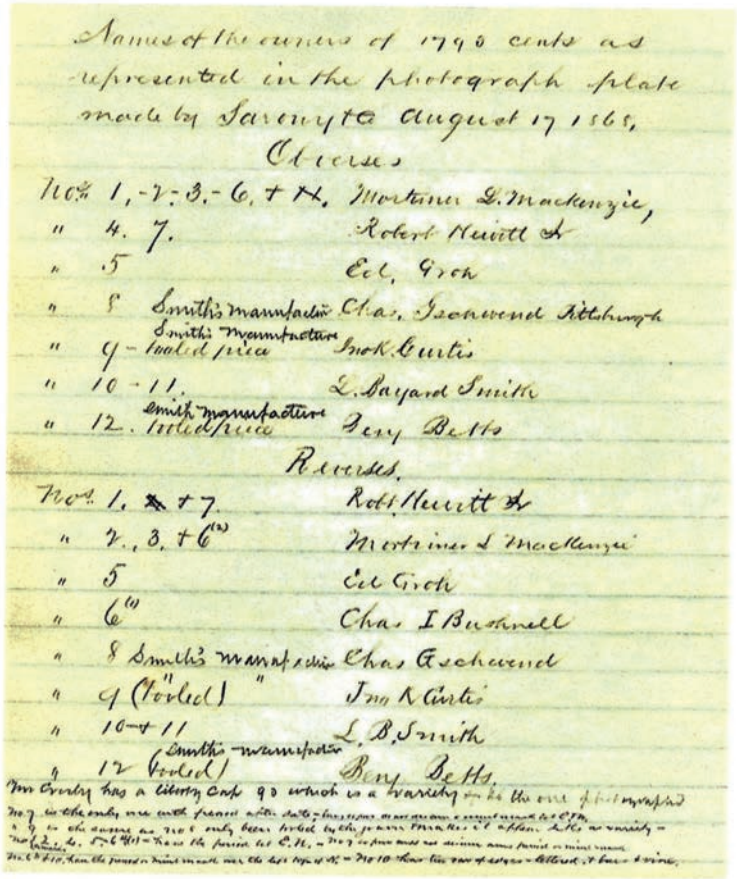


Figure 5a

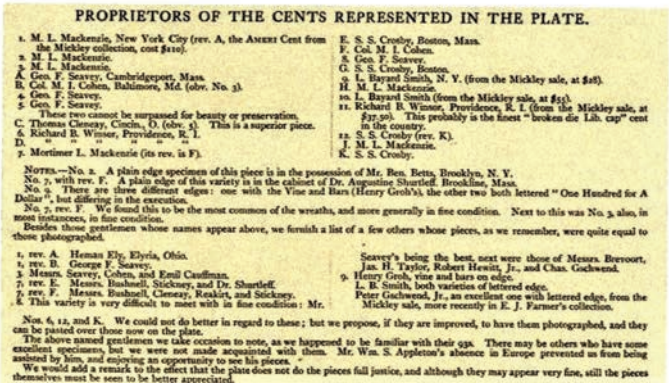


Figure 5b

B'WAY NY. George G. Rockwood (1832–1911) was born in Troy N.Y. and moved to New York City in 1857. His studio was at the corner of Broadway and 13th Street.

## Albumen Photography

Albumen prints were the standard for photography in second half of the 19th century. They were known for their excellent resolution of detail, providing sharp contrasts, brown and yellow hues, and being so thin they needed to be attached to a solid backing for support. They were also expensive to produce.

Alan Roche, the American Numismatic Society photographer, spoke with me about how these plates were photographed. The best choice for lighting photographs in the 1860s was sunlight. Gas lamps could not be used because the flame flickered and the lens cap was taken off for several seconds to expose the glass plate. Levick placed the cents, supported by pins, on a board that Alan believes was set at about a 45 degree angle to catch the sunlight. This light came from directly over the top on the first version which caused the shadows cast by the cents to be directly underneath them (4:00 to 8:00). For the second plate the position of the board was changed so the light came from the top left. This moved the shadows under the lower right of the cents (3:00 to 6:00). Most of the cents are lighter on this version, and the lighting change also made for a better contrast between the coins and the board.

So why did Levick change photographers? I can think of two reasons—price and appearance. Levick wrote in the February *AJN* that the plates would cost more than he had any idea, and the April issue would only be sent to subscribers who had paid their subscriptions (Figure 6). The Union Square area of New York City was home to other photographers such as Mathew Brady as well as Sarony and Rockwood. Maybe Levick shopped around and got a better deal from Rockwood.

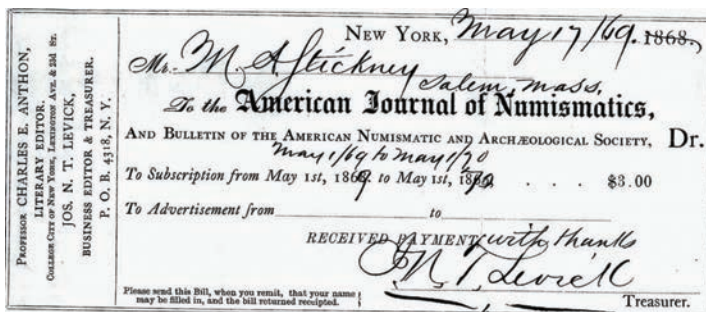


Figure 6

I think the primary reason was appearance—on the first version the images of the coins are approximately one millimeter larger than those on the second version. For 33 years I owned the 12K that appears on the plate (the motivation for my interest in Levick and his plate). I can attest to this cent being the exact size as its image on the second version.

Levick used numbers to designate the varieties on both the obverse and reverse plates. I believe it was Sylvester Crosby who changed to letters for the reverses on the

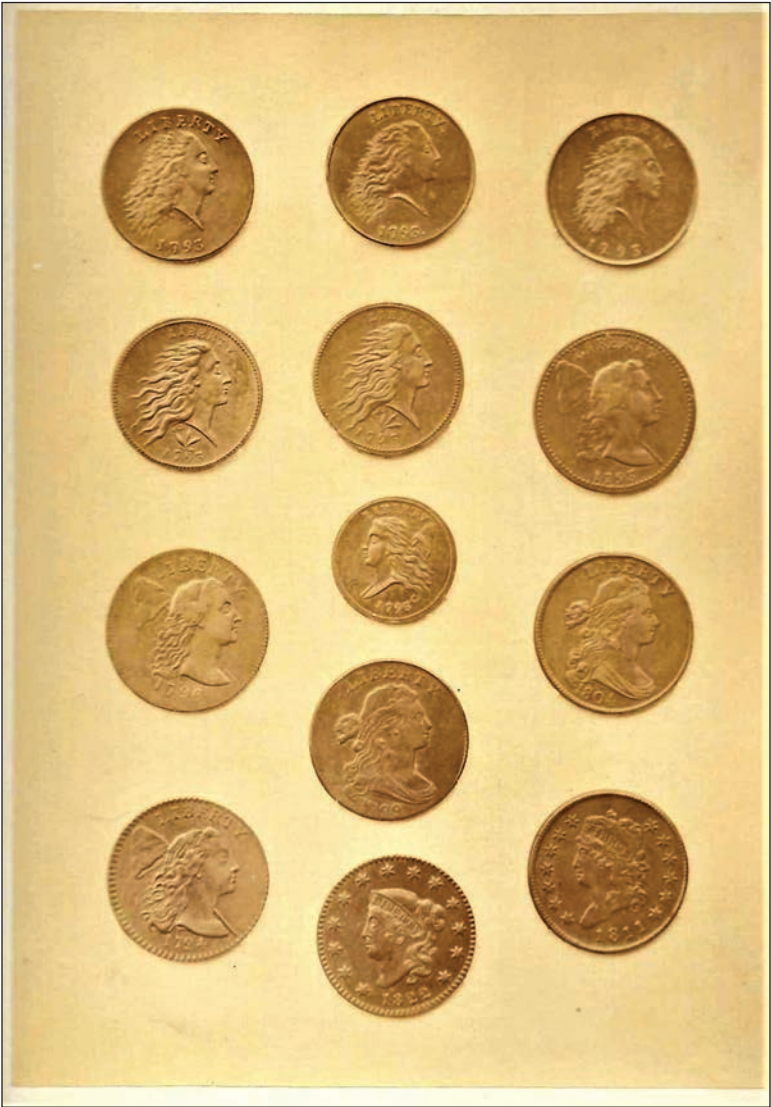


Figure 7



published versions of the plate. The numbers and letters on the top of each cent that indicate each variety are in the exact positions on each version; however some of the cents are not: 4, 5, and C are positioned higher on the first version. The bottom of the 4 almost touches the cent, and the bottom of the C is hidden by that cent. On the second version these three cents have been moved down a few millimeters. Also, the cents in the fourth row were all moved about two millimeters higher for the second version. These position changes along with the change in the direction of the lighting made the second version noticeably better.

Van Zandt was not even sure the cents were the same on both versions. That they are is easily proven by Levick's list of the "Proprietors of the Cents Represented in the Plate" (Figure 5b) at the end of the *AJN* article. These names are the same no matter which version of the plate was used.

There were only two owners of 1793 cents that appeared on the August 1868 plates as well as the published plate in the 1869 *AJN*: Mortimer Mackenzie supplied six cents and Bayard Smith two. At the bottom of the obverse plate Levick wrote about three cents from the 1867 Mickley sale:

No 2	cost	110 \$	(Ameri)	L. Mackenzie
" 10	"	29		L BSmith's
" 11	"	55		"

No. 2 was the finest known Sheldon 1. Its reverse has a line-like planchet defect through the O in OF. The A reverse on the 1869 plate shows this same defect, but Levick listed George Seavey as the owner of this reverse and Mackenzie as the owner of the 1 obverse (Figure 5b). Levick had transposed the names of the owners of this cent.

Mortimer Mackenzie was a New Yorker, who sold his collection in Edward Cogan's 20<sup>th</sup> sale in June 1869. This was the first plated catalogue in American numismatics (Figure 7). Cogan and Levick had been friends since they both lived in Philadelphia in the late 1850s. Levick moved to New York City in 1860 and Cogan to Brooklyn in 1865. I think Levick's plate influenced Cogan into using plates for the Mackenzie catalogue, and I believe George Rockwood also photographed those five albumen plates. Cogan was also first to use Crosby's designations in an auction catalogue. However, they were not used in the Mackenzie sale. It took almost two more years before Crosby's designations for 1793 cents were first used in Cogan's sale of the Ex-Governor Packer collection in February 1871.

N.Y. Nov 14/68

My Dear Sir,

I had written you a long time since acknowledging the receipt of your valued favor, enclosing me rubbings of your 93 cents, and wondered why it was I received no reply to certain matters I referred to in my letter, but a few days ago the mystery was solved, for my letter to you, was returned, but at once saw the cause of it, for I had directed it thus xxx 119 Boston Mass. Of course it had to come back – I hope this explanation will suffice for my apparent mistake.



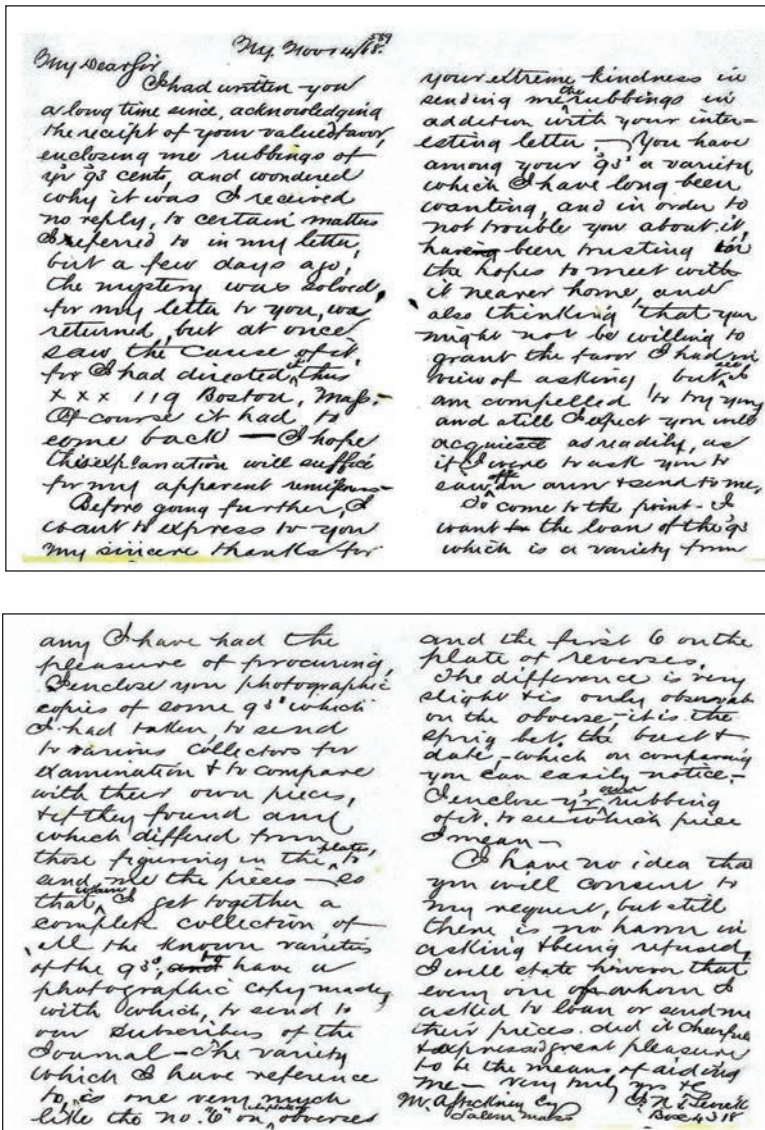


Figure 8a

Before going further, I want to express to you my sincere thanks for your extreme kindness in sending me the rubbings in addition to your interesting letter. You have among your 93s a variety which I had long been wanting, and in order to not trouble you about it have been waiting in the hopes to meet with it nearer home, and also thinking you might not be willing to grant the favor I had in view of asking, but see I am compelled to try and still expect you will acquiesce as readily, as if I were to ask you to saw off an arm & send it to me.

To come to the point—I want the loan of the 93 which is a variety from any I have had the pleasure of procuring. I enclose you photographic copies of some 93s which I had taken to send to various collectors for examination & to compare with their own pieces—so that when I get together a complete collection of all known varieties of the 93s, to have a photographic copy made with which to send to our subscribers of the Journal. The variety which I have reference to is one very much like the no. “6” on the plate of obverses and the first 6 on the plate of reverses.

The difference is very slight and is only observable on the obverse, it is the sprig bet. the bust & date, which on comparing you can easily notice. I enclose your own rubbing of it to see which piece I mean.

I have no idea that you will consent to my request, but still there is no harm in asking & being refused. I will state however that every one of whom I asked to loan or send me their pieces did it cheerfully & expressed great pleasure to be the means of aiding me.

Very truly yours,  
M. A. Stickney Esq  
Salem Mass

J. N. T. Levick  
Box 4318

NY. Nov 21/68.

My Dear Sir,

I am just in receipt of your very kind favor 19th inst. enclosing the '93 cent, and for complying with my request I owe you many thanks. I had supposed it was contrary to your principal of lending but still made the attempt with you in hopes that in my case you might conciliate a little.

I return you the piece at once, for one glance at it is all I wanted & that I did in a moment—The rubbing deceived me as I supposed by it that the piece was a variety to any of mine, but it appears I am mistaken—you can keep the photographs—you will perhaps see something better soon—With many thanks

I remain Very truly yours,  
M. A. Stickney Esq.  
J. N. T. Levick

My Dear Sir, Nov 21/68.  
I am just in receipt of your very kind favor. 19<sup>th</sup> inst. enclosing the 93 cent. and for complying with my request I owe you many thanks, - I had supposed it was contrary to yr principal of lending but still made the attempt, with you in hopes that in my case <sup>you</sup> might conciliate a little.  
I return you the piece at once, for ~~one~~ glance at it, is all I wanted & that I did in a moment - The rubbing deceived me as I supposed by it that the piece was a rarity, & any of mine, but it appears I am mistaken - You can keep the photographs, - You will perhaps see something better soon - With many thanks  
M. A. Stickney Esq. <sup>Yours truly</sup>  
T. N. Levick

Figure 8b



## The Beginning

Levick's interest in 1793 cents started early. He sold the first of his seven collections in Edward Cogan's fifth sale in December 1859. He put his 1793 cents into five distinct categories.

\$10.25	387	1793 Cent—link, AMERI— <i>fine</i> .
4.00	388	1793 Cent—link, AMERICA— <i>good</i> .
10.00	389	1793 Cent—wreath— <i>remarkably fine</i> .
5.50	390	1793 Cent—wreath, ONE HUNDRED FOR A DOLLAR— <i>fine</i> .
10.50	591	1793 Cent—Liberty cap— <i>fine</i> .

The minutes of a regular meeting of the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society (ANAS) on May 14, 1868 state there was a discussion of 1793 cents: Mr. Levick read extracts from a tabular statement prepared by him, of the varieties, sales, average prices, & etc.

At the next meeting, two weeks later, there was a motion by Levick: Moved by Mr. Levick, that the numismatists throughout the country be invited to communicate information concerning the '93 cent to the Society was adopted; and a motion by Mr. Earle that, from the interest and industry manifested by Mr. Levick in the subject the correspondence be conducted by him, was also adopted.

In October Levick published his tabular statement using the same five categories as in his 1859 sale:

[illegible]

This table was the reason Levick produced the plate. In going through an immense number of auction catalogues he discovered that the same piece may have been described in half a dozen ways by as many catalogue writers, who thus give the impression there are as many varieties. Sometimes the same variety appeared several times in the same catalogue, each time differently described. Levick wanted each variety to be recognized by its number or letter, so collectors would recognize it at once.

Levick added a postscript at the end of his October *A/N* article: "In our next num-



ber we intend to furnish Photographic Plates of a number of Types and Varieties of the Cent of 1793, to be accom-panied by detailed descriptions...”

Since the plate was supposed to be ready for the November issue, and the first version has 1868 in the lower right corner, I assume the plate was ready, but Sylvester Crosby's descriptions were not.

In the February and March issues of the *AJN* Levick wrote a commentary called the “Cents of 1793.” This was a diary of his project of getting the plate and descriptions ready for publication. In the February issue he wrote:

In the October number we had the pleasure of presenting to our readers a Table showing the prices paid at different periods for several types of the '93 cent. We made a promise then which we had not anticipated would involve so much labor and expense, and so many difficulties to surmount. We asserted that we should produce, in the following number, photographs representing these types and varieties; but as yet this engagement has not been realized. We are obliged to beg of our subscribers some indulgence in this matter, and we trust by the last number of the present volume (April issue) to be prepared to tender them something worthy of their patience, and which will meet with entire approbation. We shall here add that as these photographs will cost more than we had any idea of, the JOURNAL containing them will be forwarded or delivered to those only who shall have paid their subscriptions.

Continuing “The Cents of 1793” in the March number Levick wrote: “Leaving the DESCRIPTION in all its details to the pen of Mr. Crosby, whose work is ready, and only awaits the photographic plate...” So now Crosby's descriptions were ready but the plate was not. Five months earlier it was the other way around. This is when Levick changed photographers.

It is my belief that Levick originally planned to publish obverse and reverse plates of the 1793 cents, but it probably did not take him long to realize that the cost of producing two plates for each *AJN* issue, would be double that for the cost of a single plate.

At the bottom of each plate Levick wrote: “8, 9, & 12 counterfeits.” In his notebook Levick listed the owner's names of the cents (Figure 5a). Between these names and 8, 9, and 12 he wrote: “Smith's manufacture (tooled).” The term counterfeit, first used for these cents by Levick on the 1868 plates, stuck even though they were genuine low-grade cents that had been engraved into high grade cents by William D. Smith (aka Smith of Ann St.). The name Smith Counterfeit was not published until 1897 in Crosby's monograph *The United States Coinage of 1793—Cents and Half Cents*. These cents have been called Smith Counterfeits ever since.

Again, in the February 1869 *AJN* Levick wrote: “It is remarkable to observe how many collectors there are who have 93s, and are totally ignorant of the fact they have been hoarding counterfeits until informed by us... It is our intention to have a plate taken embracing both the genuine and counterfeits in order to aid the collectors in designating the difference...” When Levick combined the obverses and reverses onto one plate there was not enough room for the Smiths.

ELECTROTYPES, 1793 CENTS.	
The following, to No. 823 inclusive, are not only electrotype copies of the very finest procurable examples of the cents of the date, but they possess a historic importance, being generally copied from the identical specimens from which Mr. Levick prepared his plate, and Mr. Crosby wrote his article on the United States cents of 1793, which appears in the <i>American Journal of Numismatics</i> for April, 1869. The references are, of course, to that article and plate. The copies themselves are very fine, and are, I suppose, the work of Mr. Crosby.	
803	1793 Cent; obverse of the celebrated Ameri variety, with rev. B; copied no doubt from the McKenzie cent.
804	1793 Cent; rev. A; the Ameri variety.
805	1793 Cent No. 2; flowing hair; rev., B.; an endless chain.
806	1793 Cent No. 3; flowing hair, period after "Liberty" and date; rev., B., like the last.
807	1793 Cent No. 3; obv. and rev. not joined; from a superb specimen.
808	1793 Cent; the Ameri obverse, with rev. B like No. 803.
809	1793 Cent No. 4; obv. C.
810	1793 Cent No. 4; like the last, from a different specimen.
811	1793 Cent No. 5; rev. C.; the original was perfect.
812	1793 Cent No. 5; rev. C.; from a different specimen.
813	1793 Cent No. 6; rev. D. This is the variety with 3 clover leaves under the head, and though the original from which it was taken is poor, I am not aware that any better one is known.
814	1793 Cent No. 7; rev. E.; from an absolutely perfect original, which the copy closely resembles.
815	1793 Cent No. 7; rev. E.; from a duplicate of the last; very fine, but not its equal in quality.
816	1793 Cent No. 7; rev. F.; original and copy about equal to No. 814.
817	1793 Cent. No. 8, rev. G.; very fine, the original in fine condition is very rare.
818	1793 Cent. No. 9, rev. H.; original from the Mickley Sale; extremely fine.
819	1793 Cent. No. 10, rev. J.; Liberty cap; from a perfect original, producing of course an extra fine copy, presumed to be from the Mickley specimen, which cost \$55.
820	1793 Cent. Liberty cap; from a different example; about as fine.
821	1793 Cent. No. 10, rev. J. Duplicate of the last.
822	1793 Cent. No. 11, rev. J. This differs from the others mainly in having a crack extending across the piece; original belongs to Mr. Winsor of Providence.
823	1793 Cent No. 12, rev. K. Liberty cap; original, so far as known, unique.

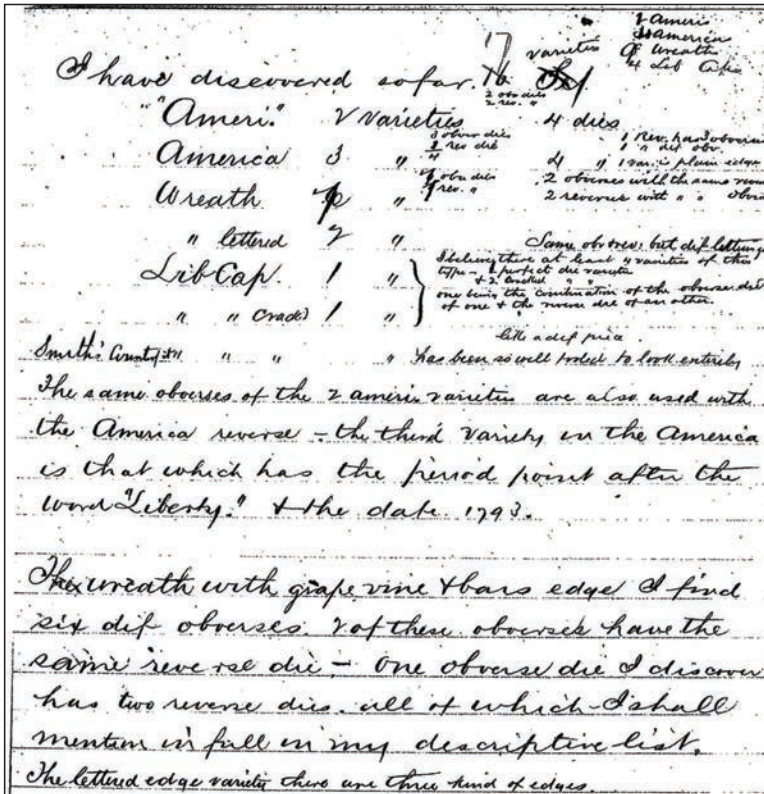
Figure 10

Doing a single plate caused a problem for Levick. The plate had two low grade cents that were unique in 1869: The 6D (Strawberry Leaf) and the 12K (Sheldon 15). The problem was how to illustrate both sides of a unique coin on the same plate. Sylvester Crosby solved this by making electrotype copies of the cents that appeared on the plate. Most of these copies were sold in W. Elliot Woodward's sale of another Levick collection in May 1884 (Figure 10). Since I once owned the 12K, I was able to determine that the obverse on the plate was the electro and the reverse the original coin.

On the plate, obverse 12 is also connected to reverse J. This is the Sheldon 16 va-

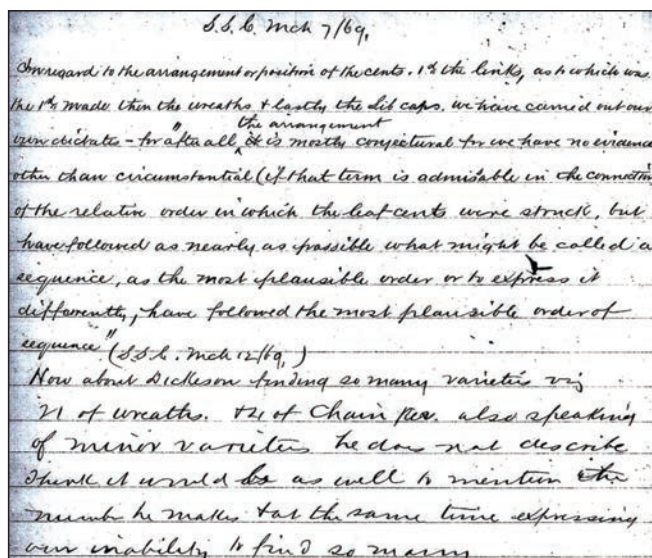
riety. The owner of this cent was Charles Bell of Exeter, New Hampshire. He had to have shown it to Crosby, but he did not send it to Levick in New York City so it could be photographed for the plate. This forced Levick to use the electrotype of the 12K to show this obverse. Bell's cent, the discovery coin and third finest known of the variety, has a die crack from the lowest hair curl to the rim that was described by Crosby in the *A/N* article that accompanied the plate. The 12 obverse on the plate does not have that crack.

Levick copied these two notes from Sylvester Crosby into his notebook:



The same obverses of the 2 ameri. varieties are also used with the America reverse—the third in the America is that which has the period point after the word “Liberty” & the date 1793.

The wreath with grape vine & bars edge I find six dif obverses. 2 of these obverses have the same reverse die. – One obverse die I discover has two reverse dies all of which I shall mention in full in my descriptive list. The lettered edge varieties there are three kind of edges.



S. S. C. Mch. 7/69,

In regard to the arrangement or position of the cents. 1<sup>st</sup> the links, as to which was the 1<sup>st</sup> made then the wreaths & lastly the lib caps. We have carried out our own dictates – for “after all the arrangement is mostly conjectural for we have no evidence other than circumstantial (if that term is admissible in the connection) of the relative order in which the leaf cents were struck, but have followed as nearly as possible what might be called a sequence, as the most plausible order or to express it differently, have followed the most plausible order of sequence.”

Crosby must have also gotten Levick's 1868 plates. In that first note he wrote about two AMERI. varieties. Cents 1 and 2 on the reverse plate were both AMERI.s Levick soon realized that the 1 reverse had been altered from an AMERICA reverse. It did not make the AJN plate, but Crosby did include it in *The United States Coinage of 1793 – Cents and Half Cents* as the B reverse. After describing this reverse he added: “I have found only one impression of this die and cannot now trace that, but describe and illustrate it from a copy taken some years ago.”

## How Many?

In the last number of Vol. 4 *AJN* (April 1870) there is the Roll of Members of the Society. The members are listed in the order they joined. There were three types of memberships: regular, honorary, and corresponding. The number of active members in these three groups totaled 100 by early April 1869 when the number that contained Levick's plate was issued. However, only those who paid their \$3/year subscriptions received the *AJN*. There may have been some ANAS members who did not subscribe to the *AJN*, just as there may have been subscribers to the *AJN* who were not members of the Society. Other numismatic societies probably received the *Journal* as well. I



have to believe that Sylvester Crosby got the issue even though he did not become a corresponding member until April 22.

*E-Sylum* editor Wayne Homren found a hoard of original AJNs in 1998. Included in this group were 40 complete issues of Vol. 3 (May 1868-April 1869). Cogan sold just the plates in his William Street store for \$1 each. There is no way to tell how many plates were produced, but it must have been over 100. There is also no way of knowing the survival rate of these plates. (In a June 1942 letter to ANS secretary Sydney Noe, George Clapp wrote: "What a pity it is that the AJN was not printed on a better grade of paper as those you have sent me are so brittle that they break when handled...")


In his 1994 article in *The Asylum* Frank Van Zandt opined that Levick sent the first version to corresponding members while the resident members got the better second version. Sarony & Co. had already made a number of plates before Levick decided to change photographers. Due to the cost Levick did not want to waste the plates that had already been printed, so he used them until the supply was exhausted. I do not think it made a difference as to who got which version of the plate.

It was at the 2000 Philadelphia ANA where I finally met Van Zandt. I was introduced to him by Charlie Davis. By this time he had calmed down and we had a civil conversation. I did thank him for his part in helping me find out about those plates made for Levick in August, 1868. If it had not been for him, I would have never learned about them.

The first variety study on American coins was on the front page of the March 1, 1859 *Boston Evening Transcript*. This study on large cents, written by Augustine Shurtleff, paid particular attention to the cents of 1793 with eleven varieties described. Just ten years later Levick published his plate along with Crosby's descriptions in the AJN. Levick's goal was to show each variety in the best possible condition. In today's terms the plate consists of fourteen of the sixteen collectible Sheldon varieties and one non-collectible—the still unique 6D. When you combine the quality of the cents to the number of varieties Crosby identified, you get the most famous photographic plate in American numismatics.



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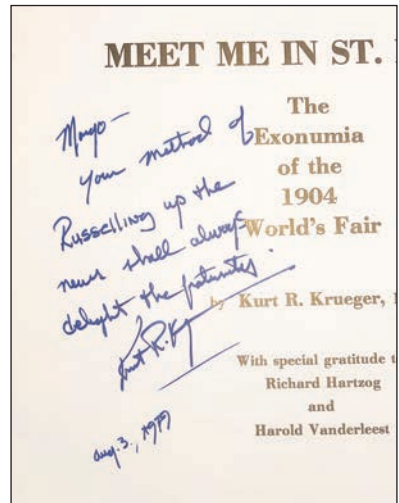
# Meet Me in St. Louie

By Cole Hendrickson

A recent addition to my numismatic library was the 1979 book *Meet Me in St. Louie: The Exonumia of the 1904 World's Fair* by Kurt R. Krueger. This book catalogs the various numismatic items that were produced for the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. While this book is a great reference in and of itself, an inscription on the first page is an added bonus that I discovered upon arrival of the book. The inscription reads: "Margo- Your method of Russelling up the news shall always delight the fraternity. Kurt R. Kg Aug. 3., 1979." This book was obviously personally inscribed by the author for Margo Russell, the famed numismatist who served as the editor of *Coin World* from 1962 to 1985. This inscription brought a smile to my face when I first saw it due to Krueger's clever use of Margo's last name in the inscription.

It should be noted that a more recent book on the topic exists in the form of Robert Hendershott's *1904 St. Louis World's Fair Mementos and Memorabilia* which was published in 1994. Hendershott, who died in 2005 at the age of 104, attended the 1904 World's Fair as a child.

As numismatic literature becomes more and more of a focus for me, I have found that inscriptions such as this one are a fascinating subset of numismatic literature which can provide a look into the history of our hobby.



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below, surrounded  
extra fine, £6 10s.  
£11, £12 15s., £  
£3 11s., and £3 1d  
Sovereign or Tu  
profile bust to left  
similar to Three P  
or 1646; £2 to £3  
£10 10s.; some h  
£1 9s., and £1 11s  
Half Sovereign  
to Sovereign, but  
fine, £5 7s. 6d., £6  
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Oxford  
£6.15.  
20.80  
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25.10.  
32.5.  
12.5  
1644 - 5.6.0  
29.8.0*

**Ethelred I., 866—871**  
SILVER, Pennies.—W  
moneyer's name

*Rex Anglo-Saxon  
640.0.0*

**Alfred (The Great),**  
SILVER, Pennies.—W  
Various types,  
SILVER, Halfpenny.—

*17.0.0 given  
15.15.0 London  
6.5.0  
14.17.0*

**Edward the Elder,**  
SILVER, Pennies and  
weight about  
rare varieties,  
7 to 9 grains (c  
fine, realised, a

*13. —  
14. —  
18.5. —*

*21.11.10  
26. —*

SAXON COINS. 5

### SOUTH SAXON.

(No coins of this kingdom have been discovered.)

### MERCIA.

*minted  
off*

**Offa, 757—796.**  
SILVER, Penny.—Weight, 18 to 20 grains. A great variety of types;  
from £20 10s. to £1 4s.; one, described as "fine," sold for  
15s.  
Obv., bust to right, + OFFA REX; rev., moneyer's name  
(Clothard) divided by a coiled serpent; £13 13s.  
Obv., king's name in the angles of a lozenge-shaped ornament,  
in centre, a circle and five pellets; rev., ALH MVND (in two  
lines); £1 11s.

*£27.0.0  
27. —  
27.10. —*

**Cynethryth, Queen of Offa.**  
SILVER, Penny.—very rare. Obv., bust to right, EOBA; rev.,  
CYNETHRYTH REGINA round the coin, in the centre the  
Mercian M in a circle of pellets; £30 5s.; others, £23 10s.  
and £12 12s.; one, described as "doubtful," realised only 5s.  
Weight, 18 to 20 grains.

**Coenwulf, 794—818.**  
SILVER, Penny.—Weight, 18 to 22 grains. Obv., generally the king's  
head; rev., the name of the moneyer; from 15s. to £3 2s. 6d.

**Ceolwulf I., 819.**  
SILVER, Penny.—Obv., + CEOLWLF REX M., diademed bust to  
right; rev., moneyer's name, surrounding a large A in centre;  
£16 10s.; another, £1 2s. Weight about 21 grains.

*£21.15. —*

**Beornwulf, 820—824.**  
SILVER, Penny.—Weight about 18 grains. Obv., bust to right; rev.,  
a cross crosslet within a circle; £29; another, £26; others,  
£8, £41, and £50.

*£25. —*

**Ludica, 824—825.**  
SILVER, Penny.—Weight, 19 to 22 grains. Types similar to those of  
Beornwulf. One, which realised £62 at the Cuff sale, is in the  
British Museum.

**Wiglaf, 825—839.**  
SILVER, Penny.—Weight, 25 grains. Of extreme rarity. Obv., king's  
name surrounding a cross, with a pellet in each angle; rev.,  
moneyer's name in three lines. In British Museum, purchased  
in 1828, for £3 10s.  
Another. Obv., nude bust to right, WIGLAF REX M.;  
rev., cross crosslet, moneyer's name in the quarters; £31.

# Writing in Coin Books... Recommended “Especially to Young Collectors”

By David Pickup

There are not many rules when it comes to collecting but auctions are a little different. One could get carried away and spend too much in the pursuit of an item or bid on a lot you do not know much about. Back in October last year I was interested in an auction at Baldwin's of St. James's in London. Auction 51 consisted of the *Reference and Working Library Formed by Christopher Comber*. Chris Comber was a well-known collector of coins from the Tudor period. He was well-respected and known for his waistcoats.

The description was:

Coin Collecting Guides, etc.: Burgess, F. W., *Chats on Old Coins*, 1913; Rawlings, Gertrude B., *Coins and How to Know Them*, 5th ed., 1935; Llewellyn Jewitt, c.1840s; G. B. Rawlings, 1898 (2), 190- [sic]; E. H. Courville, 1917; Maj. Stewart Thorburn, undated (2); F. C. Higgins, 1898; John Shirley-Fox, 1934; Nathan Heywood, 1893; W. H. Regan, undated list, varied state, some scarce (13)

I certainly did not spend too much as I got the lot for £16.00 which is only just a pound a book. A friend kindly collected them for me and I examined the lot which I had purchased unseen. It was a bit of a bargain. It included the following:

Burgess Fred W, (1913), *Chats on Old Coins*, London: T. Fisher Unwin.

Rawlings, Gertrude B, (1898). *The Story of British Coinage*, London: George Newnes Ltd.

Rawlings, Gertrude B, (1935), *Coins and How to Know Them*, fifth edition, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.

Stewart Thorburn Major W, (-), *A Guide to the Coins of Great Britain & Ireland*, London: L. Upcott Gill.

Llewellyn Jewitt, (-), *Handbook of English Coins*, London: Tegg, William.

Higgins, Frank, (1892), *An Introduction to the copper Coins of Modern Europe*, London: Edgar Lincoln.

These are all books that most collectors from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would have. They represent a great age when collecting coins was popular and relatively within the reach of many people. Some of them I know. I have a copy of Higgins already but mine was the 1970s reprint. This lot contained an original and signed by Higgins in pencil.





There were also some pamphlets:

W.H. Regan's *Catalogue of the Silver Copper and Bronze Coins*, Price 1 shilling.

Nathan Heywood, *The Five Shilling Pieces of England*, third edition, price 3d.

Shirley-Fox, John, (1934), *The Pleasures of English Coin Collecting*, foreword by Dr. Cyril Norwood, price 2/6d.

The last item like others has advertisements from a number of such as dealers Spinks, Baldwin's and Seaby's and an advertisement from Rev W.L. Gantz of Camberley who as a private collector had a large number of duplicates "prepared to part with at cost price or less... have something of everything." I did some digging and found that Gantz lived from 1873 to 1940 and was an Anglican clergyman from Stanstead Abbots in Hertfordshire. He "dealt somewhat," my source said. I love that understated slightly snooty comment.

I was drawn to the two copies of a book by Thorburn. One is covered in plastic and is in good condition with a price of £10.00 written in pencil.

William Stewart Thorburn lived from 1838 to 1886 was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army Pay Department. He wrote *English, Scotch and Irish Coins, a Manual for Collectors* anonymously in 1883 and *A Guide* in 1884. There were posthumous editions in 1888, 1898 and 1905. This shows the book was probably a success. It is unusual for a book like this to go to several editions. His collection of Anglo-Saxon English, Scottish and Anglo-Gallic coins was sold by Sotheby's in 1887. The book is illustrated

with silver and gold coloured illustrations. In the review in *Numismatic Chronicle* it is described as "comprehensive but cheap little work." Hardly a glowing endorsement. The illustrations "vary... but on the whole are good." It was recommended "especially to young collectors."<sup>3</sup> This is code for buy it if you must but do not tell anyone!

Thorburn was born in Scotland and began collecting coins like many of us while he was at school after a friend having given him some Scottish coins. In 1858 he joined the army as an ensign in 1st Royal Scots regiment. He served in India and transferred to Pay Department, becoming an expert in finances, and went to India again and elsewhere. He was appointed Chief Paymaster for Ireland but died at age of 48 after an illness. I wonder if he collected coins while abroad?<sup>4</sup>

What interested me particularly about one of the copies of Thorburn is many of the pages have prices written in beside catalogue entries and often the date 1899 and the word Montagu. Hyman Montagu was a solicitor and collector who was active in Nineteenth Century. He wrote a number of notes for *Numismatic Chronicle* and collected from 1878 bought collections and dealers' stocks. There were a number of sales from his collection starting with his duplicates from 1880s and included Anglo-Saxon and English series the Juxon medal fetched the "extraordinary sum of £770." The reviewer in the *Numismatic Chronicle* in 1886 noted exceptional prices for some items including an Alfred London penny £6. 5s and Edward VI sovereign £18 which are also noted by the previous owner of my little book.

The entries must relate to the Montague auction sales. Perhaps the owner of the book was the purchaser of the coins at the auction or simply noted the sale prices as a valuation guide. Possibly he or she was at the auction and kept a note as souvenir. Collectors did sometimes buy catalogues and mark the coins in their collection as a record of purchases. I was always told not to write in books, a rule I have repeatedly broken. I wish the collector of this book had written their name as well. Despite the slightly condescending review of the book, the owner thought highly enough of it to use it as a working reference guide. This in some ways is a better reference!



- 1 Baldwin's of St. James. *The Christopher Comber Collection, Part I*. London, 15 October 2020.
- 2 Baldwin's of St. James. *Auction 51: The Reference and Working Library Formed by Christopher Comber*. London, 15 October 2020.
- 3 *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Numismatic Society*, 1884, Third Series, Vol. 4 (1884) p 268.
- 4 *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Numismatic Society*, 1884, Third Series, Vol. 7 (1887) p 32.

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# The Largest Coin Dealer in the U.S.

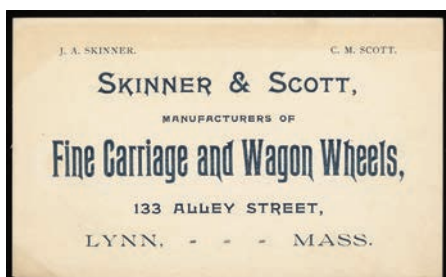
By Pete Smith

Ads placed in popular magazines called him the largest coin dealer in the U.S. in 1890. Odds are, you never heard of him. Perhaps there is a reason for that.

He shows up in the 1870 census in Lewiston, Maine, as a one-year-old child called Willie Skinner. His father was John A. Skinner, age 27, with the profession of carriage manufacturer. Also in the household is Lizzie Skinner, age 20.<sup>1</sup>

By the time of the 1880 Census, the family had moved to Hanover Street in Lynn, Massachusetts. The child was then called Willis E. Skinner, age 12. John A. Skinner was then 36 and a carriage maker. Also in the household was Gertrude Skinner, age 8.<sup>2</sup>

John A. Skinner (1843–1899) was a successful maker of carriage and wagon wheels with his partner, C. M. Scott. In 1884 they were listed at 51 and 53 Central Avenue in Lynn.<sup>3</sup> This undated (circa 1893) card shows their address as 133 Alley Street.<sup>4</sup>



Willie E. Skinner, of 53 Central Avenue in Lynn, placed an ad in Harper's *Young People* on May 16, 1882, offering two New Brunswick coppers and other items.<sup>5</sup> By the time of his first coin business, he may have been 13 years old.

## The Agassiz Association Journal

W.E. Skinner next appears in print with W.E. Skinner & Co. at 31 State Street in Lynn, Massachusetts. They published *The Agassiz Association Journal* as a periodical in June and July of 1885, perhaps as an attempt to become a national journal. The Agassiz Association was founded in 1875 for the study of natural science. In 1884 there were 7000 members in 600 local chapters. In July it was reported that St. Nicholas claimed to be the official journal of the Agassiz Association.



The August 1885 issue, Vol I. No. 3, had an ad for Skinner indicating that he was going into the stamp and coin business after September 1, 1885.

In August, Skinner's title was reduced to *The Agassiz Journal* and continued through March 1886. It was for collectors of fossils and birds' eggs as well as stamps and coins with stamps much more prominent. The collected issues were later published in a single volume.

Information for coin collectors was quite simple and basic. I was amused by one story in the September 1885 issue.<sup>6</sup>

In 1804 was the war with Tripoli. An expedition was sent over from the United States to bombard that country. It was expected to make a quick return, but for several reasons the fleet was long delayed. Meanwhile the money taken over had given out and the sailors became mutinous for their pay. At that time the only available money was silver dollars, and the entire amount coined was hastily shipped. The sailors, after receiving those went onto the mainland and bartered with the natives for provisions and supplies. The coins were bright ones, fresh from the mint, and opened the eyes of the savages, who used them as ornaments strung about their necks. At last the prince Komagua ordered all of the "ornaments" to be sent to him, in the interior of the African continent. He received those, and, on his death they were buried with him, but where he was buried is unknown. Hence the rarity of the 1804 dollar.

In October, 1885, the company offered "Fac-Simile Postage Stamps." They offered a list of over 300 varieties of foreign stamps. This was before passage of the hobby protection act.

Other dealers were accused of selling counterfeit stamps. Each issue had a "Fraud" section where scoundrels were exposed for skipping on bills or for selling counterfeit products. Skinner reported that he refused ads from other dealers who attempted to sell fake stamps. In the October 1885 issue he denounced Charles H. Mekeel who was publisher of *Philatelic Journal of America*. Among his targets in the December 1885 issue was W.K. Jewett who he accused of trying to sell counterfeit stamps. The December 1885 issue had a number of personal items. One of these stated, "W.K. Jewett of Fitchburg, Mass., has been sent to the Home for Feeble-Minded Youth." Jewett was publisher of *The Philatelist* out of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, about 60 miles west of Lynn. In the issue of December, 1885, he denounced Skinner. Here are some of the comments.<sup>7</sup>

It has been brought to light in this state one of the most dangerous and unscrupulous gangs of swindlers that has ever cheated the collecting fraternity. Their headquarters are in Lynn, though members reside in Georgetown and Boston. So far as can be ascertained, their names are as follows: William E. Skinner, Oliver A. Dale, Frank D. Donoghue, E.L. Scott and Frank W. Kurbin. Most of these are dealers in counterfeit stamps, which are offered for sale through the *Agassiz Journal*, a sheet put out by Skinner.

The *Agassiz Journal* lately contained two inculpatory letters, purporting to be from Mr. Jewett, which showed in each line the imbecility of the



writer, Skinner, who forged Mr. Jewett's name to them. This is a serious offence, punishable by law, and if Skinner was of age and responsible for his acts he would probably be brought to account. However, he is a mere school-boy, sixteen years old, and therefore cannot be held responsible.<sup>8</sup>

If *The Agassiz Journal* was produced by a sixteen-year-old, he should be commended for a remarkable accomplishment showing skills beyond his years. However, his publication folded after the March 1886 issue. The January 1886 issue of *The Philatelist* was the last, so neither publication survived the feud.

An explanation is found in *Biographies of Philatelists and Dealers* by Brian J. Birch (2018). Samuel Allan Taylor was a notorious Boston producer of fake stamps. Mentioned is an article in *The Philatelist Magazine* for October 1885.<sup>9</sup>

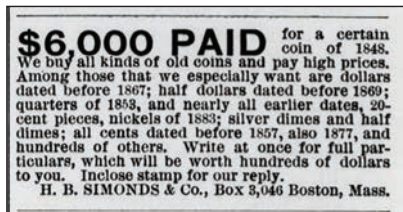
Taylor is a man who never forgets or forgives an injury and he has sworn to ruin those who try to thwart him in his trade in counterfeits. The consequence is that W.E. Skinner, a boy of 16, a tool of Taylor's, has for the last few months shamefully abused Mr. Meekel in his sheet, *The Agazzi Journal*. In his October number he also draws the well-known names of L.W. Durbin and J.W. Scott in the mud. The advertising columns of the above paper contain advertisements of W.E. Skinner and Joe Turner, in which they offer the trash sold by Taylor.

In 2021, the names of John Walter Scott and Charles Haviland Mekeel are in the American Stamp Dealers Association Hall of Fame. Skinner and Taylor are not mentioned but would probably qualify for their Hall of Shame.

Although W.E. Skinner is listed as the editor of *The Agassiz Journal*, it is apparent that the editorial direction came from Samuel A. Taylor. In fact, Skinner may have contributed little more than his name to the venture.

Skinner next shows up in 1888 as a famous magician where he described himself as "William E. Skinner, Well known as "Skinner, the World's Marvel," the Famous Magician, Mesmerist and Necromancer."<sup>10</sup> Whatever fame he achieved during his life has not survived to the present day.

Willis E. Skinner, age 20, was married in Boston in 1888, to Hattie B. Simonds, also age 20. Her parents were given as John E. and Cornelia D. Simonds.<sup>11</sup> His occupation was journalist.



This ad was placed in *Farm & Vineyard* magazine for January, 1890.<sup>12</sup> At about the same time, H.B. Simonds & Co., issued *Simonds' Premium Manual* with eight pages and prices paid for coins. The back page had an ad for "Prof. Roltair's Marvelous Cabinet of 24 Magical Tricks." [I acquired a copy while doing research for this article.]

Later in 1890, similar ads were placed in popular magazines by W.E. Skinner. It is unknown if Hattie contributed more than her good name to the venture.

[Wife #1] Hattie Belle Simonds was born in Brattleboro, Vermont, on July 26, 1869. She married William E. Skinner on December 24, 1888. Then at age 40, she married William Chapin Horton, age 58, on September 23, 1909, in Brattleboro, Vermont.<sup>13</sup> In the 1870 Census, her parents were George and Cornelia Simonds. This suggests that her father's name on the marriage certificate was incorrect. She died May 12, 1949, in Brattleboro, Vermont.

## *Skinner Advertising*

Although in business for a short time, it must have been successful, for within five years after dropping *The Agassiz Journal*, he had become the "largest coin dealer in the U.S.," according to his advertisements.

In writing to Advertisers please mention TRAINMEN'S JOURNAL.

### \$1,000 FOR AN OLD COIN

**IF YOU HAVE ANY COINS** dated before 1871, with plain date, send us a list. We pay high prices for hundreds of dates and kinds. Among coins that we want are silver dollars dated between 1794 and 1809; dates of half dollars before 1864; quarters of all dates before 1869; all dates twenty-cent pieces; all dates dimes before 1869; silver five-cent pieces before 1867; five-cent nickels of 1867 and 1868; all dates of silver three-cent pieces; nickel three-cent pieces before 1859; two-cent pieces between 1864 and 1873; all large copper cents, also small cents with eagles on, also cents of 1853 and 1867; all half cents; foreign coins, fractional and Confederate currency, etc. For above we pay big amounts over face value, if in required condition. This is a comparatively new business, and by merely keeping your eyes open when handling money, you may find many coins that we want. A short time since (Jan. 29) a **Scotchman in an Illinois town** found one coin worth \$50. Others have done even better. *The New York World* says: "Many people have become rich by looking after coins wanted by collectors." *The Home Journal* says: "Collecting coins is a very profitable business now-a-days, as there are but few in it. One Boston broker, Mr. W. E. Skinner, buys from agents all over the country, and pays them big sums for rare coins." Coins that are very hard to find in one section of the country are often easily found in others. Largest business, highest prices, prompt payments, best references. Write at once for further particulars, enclosing stamp for reply, which may be worth hundred of dollars, perhaps a fortune, to you.

**W. E. SKINNER, (largest coin dealer in the U. S.), 325 Washington St., BOSTON, MASS.**  
4-91-121.

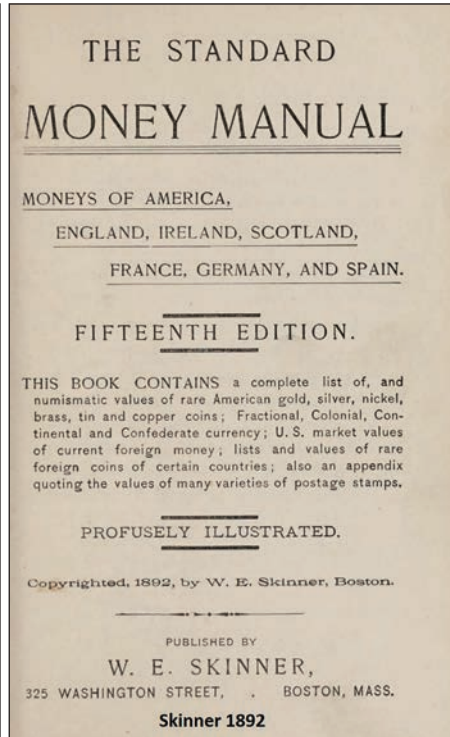
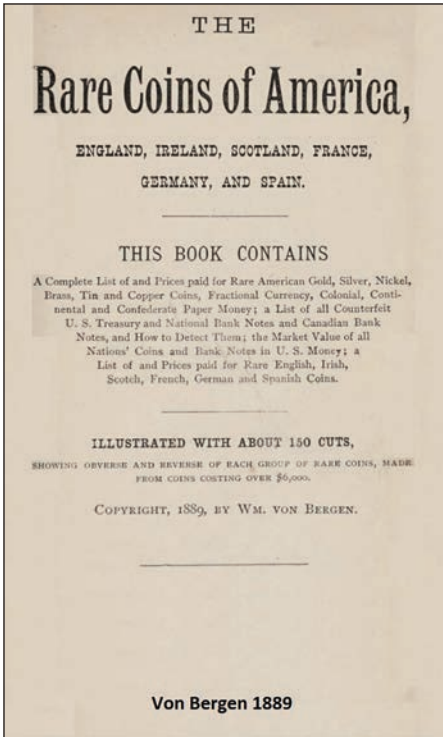
These large ads were placed in *The National Tribune* (1890); *Ann Arbor Register* (1891); *Kansas Farmer* (1891); *Locomotive Firemen's Magazine* (1891); *The Railway Conductor* (1891); *Warren Ledger* (1891); *The Railroad Trainman* (1892) and probably others. The smaller ads were placed in *Sunday School Times* (1890); *The Boston Weekly Globe* (1890); *The Cultivator and Country Gentleman* (1891); *Farm and Fireside* (1890) and *Farm and Vineyard* (1890). Surely, the *Sunday School Times* would not carry an ad that was not totally reputable!

### OLD COINS WANTED.

High prices paid for hundreds of dates and varieties, including half cents, cents, two, three, five cents, dimes, quarters, halves, dollars, etc. \$1,000 for a certain coin. Dates before 1869 specially wanted. Send list of those you have, enclosing stamp for particulars; may be worth many dollars, perhaps a fortune to you. **W. E. Skinner, largest coin dealer in U. S., 16 Globe Building, Boston, Mass.**

**Mention FARM AND VINEYARD.**

Some ads had a P. O. Box for the address. One 1890 ad had the address as 22 Medford Street in Boston. Ads for the first half of 1891 were directed to 16 Globe Building in Boston. Then the later ads in 1891 showed the address as 325 Washington Street



in Boston, a few hundred meters south of William Von Bergen and his Numismatic Bank at 89 Court Street.

## The Standard Money Manual

Skinner's book *The Standard Money Manual* was a premium list indicating prices Skinner would pay. It has great similarities to Von Bergen's *Rare Coins of America*, beginning with layout of the title page. The contents are quite similar although topics are presented in a different order. The line drawings are nearly identical. Although they are not printed from the same plates, they must share a common source.

There were nine editions of von Bergen's *Rare Coins of America* and two versions of the fifth and sixth editions. In one version published by von Bergen, the first page said, "Send all coins to Numismatic Bank." A second version, published by Skinner states, "Send all coins to W.E. Skinner." There is no record that Skinner had permission to publish the book under his name.

The coverage of American coinage runs 77 pages in *Rare Coins* followed by a foreign section for a total of 106 numbered pages. *The Money Manual* does not have numbered pages and has a smaller foreign section. The back section is filled with promotional pages and ads for Skinner.

As the title page suggests, *Rare Coins* has a section for each of England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany and Spain. *The Money Manual* is missing such sections and only has illustrations of some foreign coins with no country designations.

## *The Standard Money Manual and Stamp Collector's Guide*

This title appears on the paper cover of the book. The title page has the title as *The Standard Money Manual*. They are alternate titles for the same book. The fifteenth edition of this title (1892) was published by W.E. Skinner at 325 Washington Street. It is curious that no edition prior to the fifteenth has been seen and none that precedes this copyright date of 1892.

The sixteenth edition was published by the National Coin Co. in Boston, 832 Stock Exchange Building, which was incorporated on October 12, 1893, with C.F. Willard as president. Inside the cover is the statement, "The Coin Business established by Mr. W.E. Skinner in 1875, and conducted by him from that time until 1893, with great success, has been purchased by the National Coin Company."

The 1875 date is contradicted by earlier statements that he started in 1885 when he was 16.

The National Coin Company placed 1894 buying ads with the address of 832 Stock Exchange Building, Boston. In the 1895 Boston city directory, they were at 209 Washington, Room 2. Although they offered a 16-page catalog, no example has been seen.

## *Ads in the Standard Money Manual*

The *Standard Money Manual* has 74 pages of numismatic content followed by seven pages related to stamps followed by 38 pages of ads for other products offered by Skinner. Since there are no numbered pages they are indicated as they appear in the Newman Numismatic Portal.

Pages 86-88: Promotion for Skinner as a coin dealer.

Page 89: "Books about Coins"

Page 90: Printed Stationary / Book and Job Printing.

Page 91: Jewelry Bought / Coins for Charms / U.S. War Cents.

Page 92: Twelve volumes of the *Works of Charles Dickens* for \$1.

Page 93: Large lot of games, puzzles and magic for 10 cents.

Page 94: *Boston Raison Seeder*, wholesale at \$3 per dozen.

Page 95: *The Mysteries of New York*, 10 cents.

Page 96: Special Book Offer, non-numismatic titles.

Page 97: *The Modern Cook-Book*, 10 cents.

Page 98: *Standard Poultry Book*, 10 cents.

Page 99: Stove Polishing Mitten, 35 cents.

Page 100: Imported Handkerchief, 10 cents. This ad includes a testimonial from Viola H. Ray. That name will show up again later in this story.

Page 101: Sample Coin Set, 25 cents.

Page 102: Bonanza Combination, 20 cents.

Page 103: Big Bargain Book Combination, 28 cents.

Page 104: Roltair's Magical Cabinet, 25 Wonderful Tricks, 50 cents. Previously offered on *Simonds' Money Manual* in 1890.

Page 105: Gilt Edge Coin Book, one dollar.

Page 106: Book on Etiquette and Letter Writing, 10 cents.

Page 107: Rare Coins for Sale, example: 12 dates of old copper cents for 35 cents.



Page 108: *American Live Stock Manual*, 128 pages, 10 cents.

Page 109: The Dollar Typewriter

Page 110-111: Wizard Fan, 20 cents.

Page 112: Big Mail for 10 cents, buys a listing in his directory.

Page 113: Sun Ink Eraser, secret formula for \$1.00.

Page 114: 601 Songs for 30 cents

Page 115: Special Coin Lists

Page 116: About My Reliability

This last page has several testimonials including one from *The American Home Journal*.

“Those of our readers who have occasion to deal with Mr. W.E. Skinner. of Boston, will find that he can be depended upon. He advertises largely, employs numerous clerks, receives an immense correspondence, and is well known in every section of the country. His numismatic (coin) business is the largest of the kind in America, while his trade in books, household articles and novelties extends to every city, town and village. We recommend him thoroughly. He deserves success.”

This testimonial is curious, for Google states that *The American Home Journal* was published in 1897, after Skinner sold the business. Apparently, there was an earlier journal with the same name.

Skinner described himself as a broker. This suggests that he acquired inventory from the public that was offered to retail dealers, he also states that he has a printing business. These ads show some of the publications available by mail.

## *Books Sold by Skinner*

Davis does not mention Skinner in *American Numismatic Literature*. This indicates that no Skinner title was included in a numismatic literature sale up to the time of publication.

A search for W.E. Skinner in the Newman Numismatic Portal yields 41 results. Of these, 33 are his name appearing in the pages of the fifteenth editions of his *Standard Money Manual*. The other eight refer back to the book. Thus, our only source of information on Skinner are the words of Skinner.

Skinner makes many references to his books that are available. Unfortunately, he neglects to mention the name of these books. This is where some speculation is required.

*The Standard Money Manual* has a list of fourteen books for sale. Let's look at them.

“Coins of Southern India, by R. H. C. Tuffrell” Price postpaid, \$1.00. My best guess would be “Oriental Coins. With Special Reference to Those of Southern India” by R. H. C. Tufnell, reprinted from *The American Journal of Numismatics*, 1889.

“Hard Times Tokens” a/k/a *Descriptive Catalogue of Hard Times Tokens* by Lyman Low (1886), one of his advertisers from *The Agassiz Journal*, 40 cents.

“Von Bergen’s Numismatic Bank Book” elegantly bound in cloth and gold, \$1.00. An interesting name for *The Rare Coins of America*.

“Morey’s Buying and Selling Guide” 10 cents. Possibly *Numismatic Quarterly and Catalogue* by H. E. Morey, another Boston Dealer.

“Early Coins of America by S. S. Crosby” \$10.00. One example where he got the title and author right.

“Cents of the United States” \$1.00. Probably by Francis Doughty (1890).

“Coins of the Bible” \$1.00. Possibly by his old nemesis, John Walter Scott (1884).

“Schayer’s Coin Book” 9 cents, by John C. Schayer, another Boston Coin Dealer. A great alternative for those who could not afford 10 cents for Skinner’s *Coin Manual*.

“Coin Manual, latest edition of the ever popular pamphlet of which W. E. Skinner has sold one-half million copies. Price postpaid, 10 cents.

“Encyclopedia of the Gold and Silver Coins of the World” \$10.00, by A. M. Smith.

“Reliable Coin and Stamp Guide” 21 cents, by J. W. Scott” any of several catalogs by Scott.

“Alexander’s Coin Book” 15 cents, another Boston coin dealer who offered catalogs in several editions.

“Gilt Edge Coin Book” elegantly bound in cloth and gold, \$1.00.

“Skinner’s Rare American Coin Book” elegantly bound in cloth and gold, \$1.50. This must be one of the volumes he published, originally by von Bergen.

On the page following the title page of the fifteenth edition of *The Standard Money Manual* is a handwritten note. “As in previous editions I have put forth every effort to make the latest, the best. The popularity of the Manual (over 480,000 copies having been sold) shows that there is a demand for a strictly reliable volume of this kind.”

This brings up a serious problem. No copy has been seen prior to the Fifteenth edition. Either 480,000 copies have disappeared or Skinner is counting something published under another title.

## *Special Coin Lists*

On page 114 of *The Standard Money Manual*, he offers “Special Coin Lists. For Distribution:

“We publish neatly printed circulars on which are lists of many dates and varieties of coins, together with prices we will pay. The prices quoted are considerably below those named in our Manuals, so that you can buy at those rates and sell to me at a good profit.”

“My name is not on the list but there is space in which to print your name, thus making it appear as if you were the dealer. You will of course appreciate this.”

“We sell you these at 5 cents per dozen; 25 cents per 100 or \$2.00 per 1000. Postage paid. Sent promptly on receipt of price. Better try a hundred. They will be worth many dollars to you.”

This was a common practice, to print lists without the name of the dealer so that

dealers could imprint their own name. Although Bourne's list of price guides lists some with no publisher named, none can be tied to Skinner.

## *The Premium Stamp and Coin Manual*

In the *Agassiz Journal*, Skinner offered an old coin premium list for 10 cents. One of his ads stated that "Our new coin book will go to press August 20, 1885. In a later issue, he states, "Our Premium List of Coins and Stamps shows a list of thousands of different dates, varieties, etc., for which we give very high cash prices. Just issued. Worth dollars, perhaps a fortune, to you. Send at once. Price 10 cents."

The Hamelberg library includes an example of the Edition of 1891 - 280 thousand. 16 pages. By 1892, Skinner claimed to have sold a half-million copies.

One auction appearance in the Money Tree 26<sup>th</sup> Mail Bid Sale of August 31, 1996, lot 131, 16 pages. Described:

"A scarce piece of early American numismatics which was widely circulated, but it is not well-known because of the brittleness of the paper."

## *Mailer*

Wayne Homren has a promotional item from Skinner with four pages on one folded sheet that was mailed in 1891. It mentions some interesting items about the business.

"Six years ago we began in the business of dealing in old coins for the above purpose and have been doing a very large business since."

"We now have a large number of agents. Formerly, we advertised extensively for old coins, but during the past few years our agents have done such good work for us that we have not advertised but now we find that so many wealthy persons have recently begun to collect coins that we are again advertising to engage more new agents."

"(Successor to H. B. Simonds & Co.)"

## *Skinner's Gilt Edge Coin Book*

In the sixth edition of Von Bergen's *Rare American Coins*, Skinner offers: "Gilt Edge Coin Book. This book can be readily sold by agents. The Regular price is two dollars, but some agents sell at a dollar a copy, just half price, and yet earn a good profit. Our price to agents and dealers, at wholesale, is \$7.20 per dozen, or in large lots at \$50 per 100."

Von Bergen's *Rare Coins of America* and Skinner's *Standard Money Manual* both had gilt edge pages. Skinner advertised the "Gilt Edge Coin Book" in both of these publications suggesting that it must be some other book. What it actually was remains a mystery.

## *Life After Coin Dealing*

Skinner called himself an advertising expert. He conducted several businesses that sold products advertised in the newspapers and sold by mail order. It appears that good advertising was more important than order fulfillment. When he wore out his

welcome, he would change his name, change his company, change his location and move on with a new wife.

## *Wehman's Wizards Manual*

*Wehman's Wizards Manual Secrets of Mind Reading Magic and Ventriloquism* was compiled by W. E. Skinner and published by Wehman Bros. at 712 Broadway in New York. An 1892 edition of *The Wizard's Manual* had a copyright for W. S. Trigg. The 1895 edition has the copyright for Henry J. Wehman. The book does not include any information about the author but it has been assumed that it is the same Skinner.

## *Fairfield Floral Company*

It was about this time that he moved his business interest back to Maine. In 1898, William E. Skinner was manager of the Sawyer Publishing Company in Waterville, Maine. He was also involved with the Fairfield Floral Company. They offered raw materials and instructions to make artificial flowers and claimed they would buy back the finished product from those who paid \$110 for materials. Skinner was charged with fraud and the company was barred from the mails on April 8, 1898. Also charged in the scheme was Angie H. Wing and her daughter Viola Wing Rae.

[Wife #2] Viola Wing was born in Waltham, Massachusetts on May 10, 1865. She married Joseph F. Ray in Nashua, New Hampshire, on January 13, 1886.<sup>14</sup> They had a daughter who died young. Viola died in Los Angeles December 18, 1950. In between she was known as Viola H. Wing, Viola Wing Rae, Viola Harriett Scott and Viola Ray Scott. She lived in Europe from about 1900 to 1915. She probably used false documents to return to the United States in 1915. Her father was Lingan C. Wing who signed Scott's 1902 passport application as a character witness.

Viola is suspected of even more frauds after she was divorced from William. One article states that she got an 18 month prison sentence for fraud in Berlin. It is possible that Viola Scott was an even bigger thief and swindler than her husband.

Probably the same W. E. Skinner published the *Stamp Value Book* in 1899. It was copied from an 1895 catalog by A. B. Courtney.

## *William E. Scott*

William E. Scott applied for a passport three times.<sup>15</sup> In each he reports his birth-date as October 23, 1869. In 1902 he is traveling with his wife [#2] Viola (Rae) and his occupation is merchant. In September of 1908 he is a journalist traveling with his wife [#3] Frieda Anna and children Evelyn Perl and John William, each born in Gruenwald, Germany. In 1912 his wife [4] was Rose R. Scott and his occupation was advertising expert.

## *The Proverbs Competition*

Scott's involvement with Symond's London Stores goes back to 1900. In a 1902



advertisement, Symonds London Stores offered this advice, "It is better to deal with a well-known reliable firm like ourselves than to buy of unknown advertisers who have no mercantile standing."<sup>16</sup> Other vendors at Symonds sold a million watches at a dollar each. The company was converted into a limited liability company on June 1, 1904.

Scott marketed musical instruments and a line of bicycles. They ran a contest for people to fill in proverbs with missing letters. Winners competed for the chance to win 1000 free bicycles. Apparently there were no winners. Losers filed suit for fraud but recovered no more than their expenses. There were claims that Edison phonographs were actually copies made in Germany. In 1905 creditors forced the company into bankruptcy. The company was dissolved in 1908.

### *The Planchette Swindler*

A planchette is a heart shaped piece of wood on small casters used to facilitate automatic writing. Willis J. Skinner, a/k/a William E. Scott, was known as "The Planchet Swindler" for offering this device that would allow buyers to hypnotize themselves and read the future. He was arrested near Berlin in February 1908, but jumped bail of \$25,000 and fled the country.

In 1909 he had his name legally changed from William E. Skinner to William E. Scott, in the State of New York. His passport applications indicate that he was already using the name William E(verett) Scott as early as 1902.

### *Patent Medicines*

An English magazine commented on the patent medicine business, "The most disreputable class of proprietors of secret remedies trade under many aliases. As soon as one name becomes notorious, or when they have exhausted the credulence of the public for one remedy, they assume another name. An American named Skinner was successively Scott, Symonds London Stores, Professor Dana, Professor Pollock, and Horatio Carter."<sup>17</sup> Apparently Scott had enough and returned to America in 1908.

William E. Scott, age 39, appears in the 1910 Census living at 72 Whitney Avenue in Queens, New York, with his wife Anna F., age 26, a daughter Evenlina, age 4, a son John W., age 2, his brother-in-law Fredrick Perzynska, age 23, and a servant.<sup>18</sup> William's profession is listed as "Writer for newspaper."

[Wife #3] Frieda Anna Perzynska was born in Berlin on August 13, 1884. She married William Everett Scott at St. Giles, London, in 1904.<sup>19</sup> Their children were Evelyn Perl Scott, born July 12, 1906, and John William Scott, born in Berlin on April 13, 1908 and died December 18, 1988.

On October 13, 1911, she applied for a passport to return to Germany. Her son, Ernst Helmuth Scott was born in Germany March 1, 1912. Later in 1912 she married Ernst C. Peters in London.<sup>20</sup>

### *Koskott Laboratory*

Now operating at 1269 Broadway in New York in 1910, Scott promoted a hair growth system through his Koskott Laboratory. The product comes with worthless

testimonials from doctors with no legitimate credentials. The first box was free but treatments #2 and #3 were \$2. He guaranteed that he would pay \$10 if the system did not grow hair.

Scott's business model for all of his schemes was to offer something free or low price and then charge more for the following products that were often worthless.

This venture was associated with Edward J. Woods, author of *Confessions of a Former Alcohol Slave*. He offered treatments to cure alcoholism and to stop smoking. Some papers carried ads for Koskott and Woods on the same page with different addresses for the same building.<sup>21</sup>

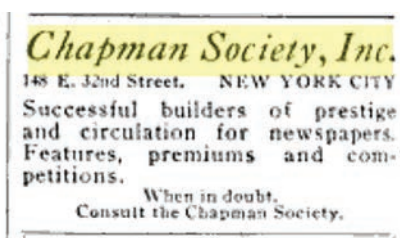
Edward J. Woods was born in 1867. He claimed that he descended from William Woods who "introduced coinage into America in 1722," and claimed to carry a Rosa Americana piece in his pocket.<sup>22</sup> In 1911 he signed Frieda Scott's passport application indicating that he knew William and Frieda.

By 1918, Scott was managing director of the Scott & Scott advertising agency. The company was capitalized at \$100,000. Officers were William E. Scott, president, David Paul Riker, secretary, and Rose Riker Scott, treasurer.<sup>23</sup> David was 22 at the time, the brother of Rose, and went on to a career in sales with a large publishing firm.

[Wife #4] Rose Riker Scott was born in Austria in 1892, sister of David Paul Riker. She was the mother of Henry Joseph Scott and Richard Alan Scott.

Scott & Scott was located at 144 E. 32<sup>nd</sup> Street in New York. They specialized in clients in mail order businesses. Thus Skinner/Scott was able to pass on the knowledge and experience gained through all of his successful mail order businesses.

The same officers were associated with the Chapman Society, Inc. located next door to Scott & Scott. Note their promotion of premiums and competitions.<sup>24</sup>



For the 1920 Census, William Scott, age 50, is living at 152 East 35<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan one block NE of his business with his wife Rose Riker Scott, age 28, and son Henry J(oseph), age 2. His profession is manager of an advertising agency.<sup>25</sup>

## *The Last Contest*

In 1924, A Boston banker offered a \$200 prize for the best new word for people who ignored prohibition and continued to drink. The winning entry was "scofflaw" and was accepted as part of the English language.

In response, Mrs. Rose Scott announced a competition and a prize of \$100 for the

best antonym for “scofflaw.” William E. Scott took thousands of entries to New York on March 16, 1924, to be reviewed by a panel of judges. They selected the contrived word “Banbug” as the winner.

William E. Scott died of Bright’s disease on April 6, 1924, in Westport, Connecticut. It was not reported if he was taking medication for the condition. His body was taken to Long Island for burial. He was survived by Rose, Henry and Richard. Children from previous marriages were not reported.

He was variously known as W. E. Skinner, Willie Skinner, Willis Skinner, William E. Skinner, Wm. E. Scott, William E. Scott and William Everett Scott. He conducted business under the names of Horatio Carter, Professor Dana, Dr. Marconi, Professor Maxim and Professor Pollak.

Along with “banbug,” Skinner/Scott has been largely forgotten. If we don’t remember him as the largest coin dealer in the U.S., perhaps it is because he concealed his identity. Or perhaps, he never really was the largest coin dealer.

My thanks to Julia Casey for providing several copies of documents used in the preparation of this article.



#### ENDNOTES

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18 1788 Mass. 1 cent, uncirculated, or to preceding. Rare.  
39 1787 Mass. cent, very good. Rare.  
40 1788 Mass. cent, uncirculated, fine color. Rare.  
41 1786 "Baby Head." Very fair.

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